



HEARTS AND CREEDS

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

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“Now he crossed the intervening bit of floor, knelt beside the couch and gathered his wife in his arms.” *Frontispiece.*

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BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

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HEARTS AND CREEDS

CHAPTER ONE

THE electric lamps, glaring out across the terrace, offered a garish contrast to the moonlight that rested on the river, two hundred feet below. Over the shining stream brooded the hush of a June night, a hush broken only by an occasional harsh call from the watchman on the ocean steamer anchored in the channel, or by the quiet plashing of the little ferry-boat which wove its leisurely course to and fro between Quebec and the Levis shore. For the hour, the whole life and light of the town seemed focused upon the long sweep of the terrace which hung midway between the dark mass of the citadel above and the shining stripe of the stream beneath.

"I do dislike that man!" Patience Tyler said.

As she spoke, she tossed the slightest possible nod to one of the passers-by. Then she turned to meet her brother's deliberate question.

"St. Just? But why?"

Laughing a little, she shrugged her shoulders, as if her dislike were momentary and a thing of no import.

"Feminine intuition. No matter now; he's gone. And so Arline is really here?"

"They expected her to land, this noon."

"At last!" The accent was of complete satisfaction.

Stanwood Tyler shook his head.

"Best not to count too much upon her, Patsy."

"Why not?" Then her step yielded to the lilt of the band in the kiosk near by. "Listen!" she said, forgetting his reply. "How can you take it so quietly? It gets in my blood, and I can't keep still."

"What does?" he queried, with the literalness born of the need of distributing to three different men three bows of differing degrees of cordiality.

"This. Everything. The crowd, and the lights, and the band, and the mixture of two races that never can combine."

His sudden amusement lighted a face which ordinarily was grave and a bit severe. Patience Tyler's name was not the only thing which showed that the family had sprung from Puritan stock.

"Pat," he cautioned her; "your phrase smacks of a chemical laboratory, and chemistry has no place in a scene like this."

But Patience shook her head.

"When I was in college," she suggested demurely; "I heard about oxygen and hydrogen, and the need of an electric spark to bring them together. Perhaps —"

Her brother's lips were still laughing; but he eyed her keenly for a moment. Then he said abruptly, —

"There go Brooke Lord and his wife."

Patience faced about sharply.

"Oh, where?"

"Up the terrace."

"Let's follow. I adore Mrs. Brooke. Besides, she can tell me about Arline."

And Stanwood Tyler, congratulating himself upon the success of his ruse, suffered himself to be led away by his impetuous young sister. Six years older than Patience, he had been in Quebec two years longer than she. He knew that the possible amalgamation of races was no fit subject for band night on the terrace.

All the world, apparently, was on the terrace, that night. It was the first evening concert of the season, and the band from the citadel added zest to the more quiet charms of the moonlight and the sweet June air. Old and young, French and English, the classes and the masses passed and repassed along the vast stretch of level boards, loitering, sauntering, pausing to exchange greetings with loitering friends, or pacing steadily to and fro, regardless of the crowd about them and absorbed only in their own low-voiced conversation. On one side of them, lights glared vividly down upon them from the open windows of the huge Château; on the other, lights winked softly back at them from the distant heights of Levis, or cast rippling trails of gleaming yellow across the water's face. Ever and anon, the hum of voices rose even above the crash of the band; then the voices sank again, and the rhythmic beat of brazen instruments filled in the pause once more. But the band spoke one tongue and was understood of all. The human voices spoke two distinct languages, and one of those, in turn, was broken into many dialects. The English was comparatively uniform. In the French, one heard the speech of Paris and of Gascony, the speech of the educated ecclesiastic and of the country habitant who had strayed up from his schooner in the basin below, drawn thither, moth-wise, by the brilliant lights which glared and blazed athwart the summer night.

At the extreme southern end of the terrace, just beneath the bulging face of the King's Bastion, the Tylers overtook their friends. Mrs. Brooke Lord looked up with a smile, as the girl's voice fell on her ears.

"Then you did come, Patience? I was sure you could n't resist such a night as this. Good evening, Mr. Tyler. How full the terrace is! We are waiting here for the others. Won't you wait with us?"

But already the two men were exchanging greetings,

and Mrs. Brooke Lord was left free to answer the question of Patience.

"Yes, Arline has come. She stopped to do a bit of unpacking, and Jimmy was to bring her up here at nine."

"She had a comfortable passage?" Patience asked courteously, yet with the indifference of one who has never known the pangs of seasickness.

Mrs. Brooke Lord laughed. She was a dark little English Canadian, not pretty, but wholly pleasing and with a manifest air of good breeding which had been swift to arouse the critical admiration of Patience Tyler. It was as well, perhaps, that it was so, for it had been under the dainty manœuvring of Mrs. Brooke Lord that Patience had made her bow to Quebec society, six months before. Mr. Brooke Lord was president of the company for which Stanwood Tyler had been chosen as resident consulting engineer, and the rest of the connection had been logical and obvious.

With the laugh still on her lips, Mrs. Brooke Lord made room for Patience beside the high iron rail.

"Yes, as comfortable as may be," she replied then. "Poor Arline is a bad sailor, and for her a crossing is always more or less of a martyrdom."

"I wonder that she feels able to come up here, to-night," Patience observed, with her gaze fixed upon the sheet of molten silver flowing silently past the base of the cliff.

Far back in Mrs. Brooke Lord's eyes, there came the suggestion of a smile. It had vanished, however, before the girl looked up again, and her tone was fittingly grave, as she answered, —

"Yes; but the attraction is a strong one. Arline has lived here always and knows so many people. She has been in England for just a year now. No wonder that she

is eager for a sight of the terrace once more, after a week of woe on that steamer down in the channel."

Stanwood Tyler caught her words and turned to follow her glance.

"Your sister is here, then?"

"In the city. She will be here directly. She came in on the Victorian, this noon."

"It will be good to see her once more," he said; but there was no ring of heartiness to the brief words.

Patience, however, supplied the omission.

"You can fancy how eager I am to see her," she said; "or, rather, you can't. You have made me so at home with you all, that I feel almost as if I were kin to you and ought to know your sister already. It is going to be delightful for me, her being here."

It was Brooke Lord who answered, and his accent was deliberate and weighty, as befitted the accent of a man accustomed to speak at meetings of boards and corporations. In her secret heart, Patience Tyler was always a little afraid of him, and she wondered stealthily, now and then, how his dainty, feminine little wife had ever dared to marry him. However, even to the superficial glance of an outsider like Patience Tyler, it was plain that the Brooke Lords were an abnormally happy and united pair, and the girl could only sum up the situation with a shrug and a mental reference to a difference of taste in husbands. Now she gave a nod of assent to Brooke Lord, as he said judicially, —

"Yes, you and Arline will be good friends. Arline is clever and has had what advantages she could get, in this corner of the world. Eh, St. Just? Oh, yes; good evening."

"And it is a good evening. Is it that Madame Lord finds herself well?" The bow and the smile and the idiom were French, the accent that of excellent English. Then

the young fellow's smile grew more animated, as he turned to Patience. "Ah, Miss Tyler, so you too are here to listen to the music? Or is it to watch the passing show? You Americans are so very observant, and this is an interesting sight; is it not?"

"Yes, and a beautiful one." But the light had gone out of Patience's eyes, the animation from her tone. She spoke with a chilly brevity which she knew how to assume at times. Then, half facing back to the river, she deliberately left the others to continue their talk without her aid.

"I wish I knew why it is that I dislike that man," she said thoughtfully, when once more St. Just had joined the moving throng. "It's not his eyes, nor his long upper lip. I don't know what it is; but he gives me goose-flesh between my shoulder blades, whenever I think about him."

Mrs. Brooke Lord laughed. She never failed to gain a certain amusement from Patience Tyler's outspoken, American analysis of the passing situation.

"He was very well introduced here," she demurred.

"Very likely. So was I," Patience answered whimsically. "Still, that does n't account for everything."

"For more than you might think," Mrs. Brooke Lord replied, with a swift recollection of certain clauses of Quebec's social law.

Brooke Lord broke off in the midst of a sentence.

"St. Just is clever and of excellent family," he observed, with the same judicial accent he had but just bestowed upon the subject of his sister. "He is a Parisian, of course, and quite unlike the type of men we are used to meeting here."

"But I'm not used to meeting anything," Patience protested, with sudden perversity. "I've seen very little of the French, anyway, so I can approach the subject with a perfectly unbiased mind."

Brooke Lord bowed in assent ; but he added, —

“And yet, I should regret being accused of having a bias.”

But Patience laughed in girlish mockery which even Brooke Lord found it hard to withstand.

“Bias !” she echoed. “You are cornerwise with it, all you Canadians here, and your bias is about so wide.” She measured with her two forefingers. Then she laughed again, low, but with mirth.

Brooke Lord stiffened slightly.

“I was not aware —” he began.

Patience interrupted him.

“Oh, yes ; you were. Moreover, you like to be biased. In fact, I think I should like it, myself, if I were in your place. Being merely an American, I stand back and laugh at it all ; but,” the laugh left her eyes, and she faced him steadily ; “but the truth is, Mr. Lord, I’ve enough of the English tradition, myself, to see your side of the question and, maybe, to agree with you better than I like to admit.”

“But,” Stanwood Tyler spoke thoughtfully ; “after all, what is the question ?”

Patience turned about and tucked her hand through the curve of his elbow.

“The electric spark,” she responded demurely. “Remember, though, that it is band night on the terrace.”

As a rule, it was characteristic of Patience Tyler never to allow herself to be suppressed. This time, however, she yielded to the imperative little gesture by which her brother gave warning that her banter had passed beyond the limit of Brooke Lord’s ken. Then Stanwood Tyler said gravely, —

“I think I see Miss Lord now, coming up the terrace. Shall we walk down to meet her ?”

He spoke to Mrs. Brooke Lord ; but it was Patience who answered alertly, —

“Yes, come. I really am impatient, you know.”

However, someone claimed Brooke Lord's attention, and they were still waiting by the rail at the end of the terrace when Arline Lord and her brother joined them. Patience faced about in frank curiosity, as the brother and sister came near them. Jimmy Lord, tall and lean with the muscular sparseness which she had learned to regard as characteristic of the Anglo-Canadian, was no unfamiliar figure upon her horizon. Months ago, the two had become excellent comrades, and, from the start, Patience had looked upon their camaraderie with the impersonal eyes with which she had viewed countless friendships of her college days. One and all, they were based on propinquity, athletics and a kindred taste in the matter of books. In Arline, she looked for something different, something more stirring and infinitely more subjective. Devoted as she was to Mrs. Brooke Lord, Patience could never quite forget the matron in the friend. Brooke Lord and the babies formed an immutable background to all the pictures. One never could discuss vital and personal concerns with a companion who was liable to be interrupted at any instant by a demand as to the whereabouts of shirtstuds or the new bottle of Baby Food. Mrs. Brooke Lord was a point in perspective; Arline might well be a point in space.

The first impression of Arline was wholly pleasing. Tall, so tall that Patience, even, was unable to meet her eyes on a level, Arline Lord bore herself with the careless ease of an acknowledged queen. Her features were regular, her head poised nobly, her walk and bearing and her simple gown were distinctive, elegant. As she came slowly up the terrace at her brother's side, Patience saw, one after one, heads turn to look after her and hats doffed in greeting. It was later on, when she was alone, that night, that Patience bethought herself that, for the most

part, the greetings were admiring rather than cordial. It was later still that she suddenly took note of the fact that, although Arline's lips were full and mobile, her violet eyes were cold.

Nevertheless, Arline met her cordially. She could not well fail to do so, however, under the influence of Jimmy's boundless enthusiasm. Jimmy Lord was a self-avowed optimist; but he owned a saving sense of humour which was aimed as often at himself as at his neighbour. For the rest, after six or seven years of Eton and Oxford, he had settled down in Quebec to enjoy himself and to spend the money left him by his father's will. People who knew the Lord family most intimately were prone to smile a little, as they confessed that much of Jimmy's enjoyment and a good share of Jimmy's spending concerned themselves with the home of Jimmy's brother who had come in for a far smaller share of the paternal fortune. Nevertheless, Jimmy's foothold in society was by no means dependent on his bank account. Jimmy was Jimmy; and, without his jovial presence, functions languished and were regarded as unsuccessful.

"I know we are shockingly late," he was saying now, in answer to the questions of his sister-in-law. "Arline wanted to get a note off by to-morrow's steamer, and we waited for that. A jolly sort of night; isn't it, Miss Tyler?"

"Glorious. I wish it would never end," she answered, with an alert enthusiasm which caused Arline to lift her yellow brows in mute question.

But Jimmy swept in.

"But you'd be so beastly sleepy at to-morrow breakfast, you know," he remonstrated.

"I never think of to-morrow," she answered audaciously.

"No; you can sleep it off, while the rest of us bemoan your absence," Jimmy said, as he bowed to St. Just who

was once more rounding the end of the terrace. "This is your first night of seeing the terrace in full swing; isn't it?"

She nodded.

"And you find it —"

"Adorable." Patience capped his phrase.

Again Arline's brows went upward.

"You are enthusiastic, Miss Tyler."

There was an almost imperceptible accent of superiority in the words, and Patience met it defiantly.

"Well, why not?" she demanded.

Arline smiled. Even under the harsh glare of the electric lights, her face showed itself as one of unusual beauty.

"No reason. I always love to hear strangers say a good word for the dear old city; it is so quaint and quiet."

Patience glanced about her.

"Not so quiet now," she objected.

"No; not in one sense. But, after all, band night on the terrace is a good deal like Saturday morning on the market. Everybody is here; but it is only now and then that one sees a familiar face. After London, one realizes it more than ever; and yet I never used to come here without feeling that I should like to meet somebody new, somebody of whom I had never even — Yes, Brooke. What is it?"

As she spoke, she turned about to face her older brother who, leaving the others to linger by the rail, had wandered away into the heart of the ever-thickening throng. Now, however, he had returned to halt at his sister's elbow, and at his side had halted another man, young and slight and short and swarthy, with luminous dark eyes and thin, close-shut lips around whose corners played always the faint suggestion of a smile.

Brooke Lord's answer was delayed by the thud of the

evening gun. The sound boomed down from the bastion just above their heads, for one brief instant sent a rocking thrill along the terrace and then went crashing across against the Levis heights, where echo replied to echo and echo to echo again, growing faint and fainter until the last dim echo sank away into the moonlit, distant silence.

When Brooke Lord spoke again, his voice was somewhat impatient, as if the needful delay had irked his ponderous dignity.

“Arline,” he said ; “Leleu has asked to meet you.”

CHAPTER TWO

IN a sense, it was more easy to analyze Amédée Leleu than it was to account for the results of the analysis. To the impressionable, mobile temperament of a boy, he linked the unthwartable purpose of a man. The two elements were at constant strife. The man dominated the boy, only to be foiled again in turn. As yet, neither one of them had held the supremacy for long at a time. For the future, not one of Leleu's friends was willing to risk a forecast. That his power matched his purpose was evident, evident, too, that both power and purpose might weaken in the face of the inherent gentleness of his nature.

By birth, Leleu was a countryman. He came from farther down the river where, long decades ago, his ancestors had received their seigniorial rights from the hand of the King of France. The rights had vanished; but the tradition had remained. The Leleus were subjects of Protestant Britain; but they were French Catholic to the core of their soul, French Canadian Catholic, rather, for in these later years, the French on this side the Atlantic have developed racial traits which are all their own.

As a rule, each generation of Leleus had had two or three sons, and it had become a matter of family pride that, in each generation, one son should remain on the family estate and one should be educated for the priesthood. The other sons, if there were others, were expected to follow a profession, and many a Doctor Leleu or Lawyer Leleu had helped to make at least the neighbourhood history of some part of the province. Of the sons of the

past generation, but two Leleus were left, one a priest attached to the Grand Seminary in Quebec, the other the father of Amédée Leleu. And the father of Amédée Leleu, the stern young autocrat of the entire county, had taken in marriage the fragile daughter of one of his neighbouring autocrats. Seven years later, her life had ended with the first breath of her third-born son, and Amédée had come into life, deprived of all memory of his mother, but, alone of all three sons, the inheritor of her gentle, high-strung temperament.

The oldest of the sons had chosen the church and already was received into the number of Redemptorist Fathers who watch over the shrine of Sainte Anne. The second son, then, succeeded to the family estate, quite to the satisfaction of young Amédée who, from his boyhood, had steadfastly adhered to his choice of law as his ideal profession. Of certain corollaries to that profession as yet he made no mention. So long as he remains in the home, the youngest child never quite outgrows his babyhood; and the paternal Leleu, moreover, would not have been altogether satisfactory, as a confidant in regard to boyish ambitions.

By the advice of his uncle, Amédée had been sent early to Quebec. For three entirely happy years, he had wandered about the gray old streets, clad in the long, straight coat and bright green sash of the Seminary boy; for six or seven years, he had been a student of Laval, winning honourably his bachelor's degree and then, with even greater honour, his right to the blue-bound hood of the legal faculty. These Laval years were also happy, but less unreservedly so. As Seminary boy, he had regarded all things as well within his grasp. As student in the university, his ambitions grew and, with their rapid growth, grew also doubts of their fulfilment. Nevertheless, when he sailed for Europe where he was to complete

his study by a year or two in the Paris schools, young Amédée Leleu, his thin lips shut tight together, stood far towards the steamer's bow, facing forward down the river. He loved the past days and the old scenes; but their work was done. It was the new which was to make him fit to play the part he had chosen for his life.

At the end of three months, he found himself looking back with a certain regret upon the boy who had left Canada. It seemed to him that one phase of his life had ended with the hour when he had sailed away from under the shadow of the gray old citadel. The past three months had broadened his nature and its outlook. Nevertheless, he had seasons of wondering whether the broadening had been quite worth the while. He had left Quebec, his head full of dreams of a paternal, but glorified France, of a country loyal at heart to the best of the traditions she had grafted upon her young colony, two hundred years before. He was quite aware of the outward change in her political life; but he had imagined that the same warm human pulse was beating in the frequenter of the Parisian boulevard as beat in his own monarchical, Catholic heart. He was swift to realize his own mistake. Already the Combes ministry was seeking a spot for the point of that entering wedge which was to tear asunder the masses of Parisian politics and of the Vatican; but Leleu had no need to keep his eyes upon the ministry to learn that the structure of French Catholicism was rotten to the core. The talk of his mates on their way to their lectures was enough. Of the dozen men with whom Leleu was thrown in daily contact, three were but feebly Catholic and seven more conversed in the terms of latter-day agnosticism. And the mouthpiece of the seven had been Achille St. Just. For a few weeks, Leleu tried in vain to content himself with the friendship of the remaining two, one of whom was anæmic and the other dull. For a few

weeks more, he cast in his lot with the seven, and sought to disregard their avowed free-thinking for the sake of the clever terms in which it phrased itself. Then the spirit of his ancestors swept back upon him. He shook himself free of all things save his work, and went his way, alone.

Some men would have yielded to the influence of the place and hour, would have adopted the prevailing religion. Not so Leleu. His devout, unquestioning belief was jarred, only to return to a more stable equilibrium. His high-strung, susceptible temperament, inherited from his mother, caused him to be sorely wounded by the general attitude of scoffing disregard of all he deemed most sacred. The sterner stuff in his paternal blood led him to shut up the wounds from the sight of all and nurse them until they had healed to a scar which should be tougher than the original fibre of his being. Amédée Leleu, thanks to his ancestry, succeeded in achieving the wellnigh impossible. Out of the turmoil of student Paris, out of the prevailing atheism which surrounded him on every side, he came back to his native province, a clean-minded Catholic gentleman, broader of intellect for his foreign training, firmer of purpose, but at heart as simple as a boy. Loyalty, faith and the love of woman: these still for him were words fraught with solemn meaning.

With him, a good deal to Leleu's regret, had come Achille St. Just. As clever as Leleu and as full of purpose, St. Just was vastly more unscrupulous as to his methods of attaining that purpose. In his boyhood, St. Just had made up his mind to win out in some race or other; it mattered little to him where was the race-course or what was the prize. In those first early weeks, he had seen much of Leleu. He had liked the young Canadian, for Leleu was attractive in person and in mind. Afterwards, St. Just had never entirely yielded to Leleu's efforts to withdraw from the friendship. He went in for

the same lectures, dropped in often at Leleu's room and treated him with a cordial fellowship which, however selfish in its motive, yet was not wholly unwelcome to the homesick, reserved young fellow, so plainly alone in this roistering environment. St. Just had infinite tact. From the first, he held the conversation away from possible points of controversy, and devoted his time with Leleu to solving the question as to whether French Canada would be the best race-track open for his speeding. He solved it in the affirmative. With the facility which marked his whole career, he possessed himself of certain useful letters of introduction, and sailed for Quebec on the same steamer which was taking Leleu home to begin the career that long since he had marked out on the chart of his life.

On the same steamer, there had also crossed Brooke Lord. Quebec passengers were few, as were also good sailors, and the crossing was stormy. Driven to seek one another's society, the three men had smoked and talked together for hours at a time. When they went their way from the custom house, Brooke Lord had mentally registered his full approval of Leleu, of whom he had never since lost sight. St. Just, meanwhile, had made up his mind that Brooke Lord was a man for him to know. A week later, by skilful manœuvring, he was making his bow before the tea table presided over by Mrs. Brooke Lord. To the mind of St. Just, no man could achieve professional success without the aid of some measure of social recognition. His theory even extended itself to the belief that political advancement was decreed in the drawing-room no less often than in the caucus in the City Hall. At all events, he resolved to cast an anchor in either direction.

All that was a year before. Since that time, the two men, Leleu and St. Just, had gone their separate ways, meeting occasionally as was almost inevitable in so small a city, but sharing few interests in common. Leleu had

come home to accept a position as secretary to a Liberal French minister. St. Just, after a swift survey of the field, had determined to devote his facile wit and fluent pen to the cause of journalism. Local politics had no especial meaning to him. He merely assured himself that his best chance for winning recognition for his talent lay in the field of least competition, and that, for the present, that field stretched away on the Conservative side of the political fence. It would be time enough to develop political affiliations of his own, when his name had begun to carry weight. Nameless, he could be a free lance, and, professing allegiance to a party, he could still concentrate his work entirely upon himself. In the meantime, he made the most of his temporary Conservatism by winning a position of some prominence in the heart of the social circle of English Protestantism.

On the day after their introduction on the terrace, Leleu met Arline just outside the toll-gate on the Grande Allée. His own duties at the Parliament Buildings were but just ended; but the girl was evidently coming in from a long walk. In her pale cloth gown and wide hat, flushed and animated with her exercise, she seemed to Leleu even more striking than on the previous night. After the short, dark girls of his own race, alert and piquant though they were, Arline's tall blond beauty was no less a revelation to him than was her masterful bearing, the quiet power of her whole poise. He was conscious of a quick thrill of pleasure, as he watched her approach, and he halted before her, hat in hand and his curiously winning smile showing about the corners of his lips. And Arline glanced at him inquiringly, with interest, and then with a gracious smile of recognition. Pausing, she held out her hand.

"Oh, Mr. Leleu. How dull of me, not to know you! But the dazzle on the terrace does change one so."

"And in all the familiar faces who greet you, there

must be small chance for a stranger to win a share of your attention," Leleu suggested.

He spoke with the slightest possible accent ; but the formal phrasing of his words showed that he might easily be baffled by an unaccustomed idiom. In London and Paris, Arline spoke fluent French. Here at home, however, it was for the Frenchman to come all the way. She made no effort to bridge the chasm between the races.

"Yes," she answered carelessly ; "I suppose old friends are bound to have the first right. You are a stranger here, Mr. Leleu ?"

"I was educated here from my boyhood," he told her quietly. "Only for two years I was in Paris."

"And have just come back ?" she questioned, with a perfunctory showing of interest.

"A year ago. I returned on the same steamer with Mr. Brooke Lord."

"Yes, I remember now. He told me, last night."

Once more, Leleu winced at the total disregard of her tone. And yet, after all, there was no especial reason that this queenly girl, in all the excitement of her first night at home, should have allowed Brooke Lord's account of him to find lodgment in her memory. Nevertheless, Leleu would have preferred to have it otherwise. Far back in his dark eyes there lurked an expression which should have told one less observant than Arline that already he found her more attractive than he would have liked to confess.

"He had just then left you with your aunt in London, I suppose ?" Leleu said, after a little pause.

"Yes, if it was when he came over, last year." Arline's hands were busy with the fastenings of her light summer coat. Already the sun was dropping towards the west, and a breeze had sprung up from the river. The girl drew her shoulders together, then moved slowly forward.

"That was the time." Leleu raised his brows inter-

rogatively, as he fell into step at her side; but Arline's face was impenetrable, so he walked on, albeit with some hesitation. Among his French friends, however, Leleu had never known the need for hesitation. Nevertheless, it was not pique alone which led him to maintain his place at Arline's side. "You also were in Paris?" he asked at length.

"Yes, for three months."

"And you enjoyed it?"

"Of course. Who could help it?" Her accent showed a slight disposition to disdain any one who could withstand the charms of the French capital.

Leleu was conscious of a sudden swift desire to acquaint her with the fact that he was of the small minority whom she could so disdain. Then he smothered the desire. His instinct assured him that it would be fatal to a further acquaintance, were he to disagree with Arline now. The poise of her head, the curve of her short upper lip, led him to suppose that she would be less wayward than captious in her tastes, less stable in adhering to her own tastes than tolerant of the distastes of others; in short, that she was a woman to argue, rather than to be argued with. And, after all, what use would there be in an argument for which they had no common ground? The Paris of the gay girl tourist was by no means the Paris of his own student days. He changed the subject swiftly.

"You have been for a long walk?"

"To Sillery. I tried to coax Jimmy to go with me; but he had some engagement or other. It is an odd feeling, this coming home to find your family deep in engagements that you know nothing about. One feels quite in the way."

"Oh, not at all," Leleu protested dutifully.

This time, Arline's smile was wholly sincere.

"You said that with most becoming promptness, Mr.

Leleu. An Englishman would have stopped a bit to think the matter over, before he committed himself. That is the besetting sin of us English: we are always afraid of seeming to talk at random."

Leleu's smile widened.

"But I was not speaking at random in the least," he protested again.

"I hope not. But what were we talking about? Oh, that I felt in the way. Still, I dare say that will be over in time. But to-day my sister had to go to tea with some people that I never heard of, and Jimmy had an engagement of some sort out at the Falls. He offered me his dog as companion; but the creature barks and worries my skirts, so I declined." She laughed a little, as she spoke. "You know my brother Jimmy, I think?"

"A little. Not so well as I know Mr. Brooke Lord."

"And yet, Jimmy is generally called the easier one to know," Arline commented thoughtfully. "Still, I suppose he is more likely to stay with his own set than Brooke is."

"Yes," Leleu answered briefly. "And that set is wholly English."

The silence dropped, and lengthened. Then, as she turned to the left and came under the trees of the Belvidere, Arline broke it, moved by a sudden impulse for which afterwards she was quite at a loss to account.

"My sister, Mrs. Brooke Lord, receives on Monday afternoons, Mr. Leleu. I have no doubt —"

He interrupted her a bit eagerly.

"I thank you; it would give me pleasure." Then he glanced up at the cool shade above him and shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly. "But forgive me, Miss Lord. I have intruded too long upon your walk. Permit me." And, once more lifting his hat, he stepped aside and left her to pass on alone.

CHAPTER THREE

“**T**HE difference between the French and English point of view. My dear Miss Tyler!” Jimmy Lord remonstrated.

Patience provided an elderly dowager with a minute cup of tea and five lumps of sugar. Then she dropped her hands into her lap and turned to face Jimmy who, under the shallow pretext of offering her occasional help, was leaning against the mantel at her side.

“But there is a difference,” she urged.

“*Voilà la différence!*” Jimmy hummed softly. “That is an excerpt from a naughty, slangy song, Miss Tyler; but it seems appropriate, though you say you don’t *voilà* the difference in the least.”

“Yes, I do. I see it, only I can’t seem to grasp its nature.” Patience spoke with a sudden vehemence. “You have lived here always. You must know what it is.”

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

“Perhaps,” he admitted nonchalantly.

Patience poured another cup of tea and, under the direction of its future possessor, dropped four lumps of sugar into the cup.

“Fancy drinking such treacle!” she said, with a grimace of disgust, as the recipient of the cup vanished in the little throng of callers.

“How do you take yours?”

“With a bit of lemon.”

“Characteristic of the races,” Jimmy commented, as he

munched a biscuit. "Lemon goes with your national nerves. We prefer the physical sustenance of sweetened cream."

Patience laughed.

"Let's return to our sheepfold," she suggested. "You have summed up one difference. Now try the other."

"It's not the same thing," Jimmy parried. "France drinks coffee. In England and America there's kinship, and history repeats itself in the tea. I don't mean Boston harbour, either. I always did grudge that waste. If I'd been in the place of your chaps, I'd have gone out, next night, and dredged for it."

"And incidentally drowned your principles?"

"No," Jimmy answered blandly; "first I'd have chucked the tea, and then I'd have chucked the principles. But, about your latter-day tea, your lemon is like your politics, a reaction from our sweetened cream. In either case, the tea is the main thing, after all; it does n't matter so much how you doctor it up to suit your individual taste. Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Laurie?"

"Good afternoon, Jimmy. So glad to see you working for once. Are you really helping Miss Tyler?"

"No; merely providing her with a few good epigrams for use at dinner, to-night. I hope, for her sake, you will put us at opposite ends of the table."

"Certainly. I have you engaged as my right-hand man, and Mr. Laurie always wants Patience near him."

"What a ripping sort of arrangement! Then, unless there should come a general pause or you should compare notes afterwards, I won't have to think up anything more to say. It's not too bad an idea, this making one set of talk do double duty. We are going to discuss racial traits, Mrs. Laurie. Apropos, what do you take in your tea?"

Mrs. Laurie raised her brows. She was not quite sure

how to take Jimmy's banter. She found refuge in exceeding literalness.

"Only two lumps, and just a dash of cream, please."

Jimmy handed her the cup with an exaggerated bow.

"Mrs. Laurie, I am convinced that you had an American grandmother."

Mrs. Laurie's face betrayed her surprise.

"Yes ; but how did you know ?"

"Intuition, coupled with scientific investigation. Don't apologize. It is really quite respectable to be an American, nowadays. The Rhodes scholarships settled all that. But are you going to leave us ?"

"I want to see your sister. Where is she ?"

"I'm not quite sure. Molly can tell you, though. She planned the fighting line, to-day." And Jimmy pointed to his sister-in-law at the distant end of the room. Then, as Mrs. Laurie's silken linings announced her departure, he turned back to Patience once more.

"Too bad to tease her," she rebuked him. "Mrs. Laurie really is an old dear."

Jimmy lifted his hand in counter rebuke.

"Delete the adjective, Miss Tyler ; else you will be a subject for a court taster, to-night. Mrs. Laurie has turned just thirty. That by no means signifies that she has just turned thirty. In fact, I think she rounded the angle, when I was still in knickerbockers ; but history ceased at that hour."

"And the French ?" Patience reminded him.

"Miss Tyler, the worst trait of you Americans is your talent for persistent iterations."

"And of you English, your avoiding a difficult answer," she retorted.

Jimmy laughed. Then he glanced over his shoulder. Then he made trenchant reply, —

"Miss Tyler, the difference between the French and the

English Canadian is just this: the Englishman hopes he's in for eternal salvation and a firm grip on the country, and the Frenchman knows it."

Suddenly the girl caught his late mood of banter.

"Knows the Englishman is?" she questioned.

And once more Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"Never!" he responded briefly. Then he looked up with a smile, as Amédée Leleu drew near the table.

"Molly," Arline had said, that morning; "I have asked the man to call."

"What man?" Mrs. Brooke Lord asked, with absent inattention.

Arline never moved her eyes from the street, where they rested on the short, slight figure of Amédée Leleu, hurrying towards the Parliament Buildings across the way. It was not until the figure had reached the opening in the low gray wall and turned in through the little park that she spoke again. Then, —

"Mr. Leleu," she answered.

Mrs. Brooke Lord looked up from her letters.

"Oh, my dear!" she remonstrated.

"Well, why not?" Arline's tone betrayed a certain hostility. Her sister-in-law was older than she and, as the daughter of a prominent senator, took social precedence of the child of a wood-pulp millionaire. Both facts had always led Arline to be swift to resent any social advice offered her by Mrs. Brooke Lord.

Now Mrs. Brooke Lord's tone betrayed her own mental reservations.

"Nothing; only —"

"But Brooke introduced him."

"I know; but a man like Brooke meets all sorts of people."

Arline faced about sharply. The colour had come into her cheeks, and her hand, resting on a fold of

the curtain, suddenly crumpled the fold into deep wrinkles.

"What have you against Mr. Leleu, Molly?" she demanded, and her voice rose by a tone or two on the words.

"Nothing, my dear." Mrs. Brooke Lord laughed lightly. "The only question is, what have you for him?"

"Merely that I like him."

"At a first glance?" Mrs. Brooke Lord questioned. "He must have made a strong impression; you have seen him once."

"Twice," Arline corrected her coldly. "I really can't see why the fact should afford you such amusement, Molly. Mr. Leleu is obviously a gentleman; his manners and his tailor are equal to Brooke's, if not to Jimmy's."

Mrs. Brooke Lord flushed at the subtle thrust. She was fond of Jimmy; she adored her husband. Not all the adoration in the world, however, could blind her to a certain ingrained difference between the two men. Nevertheless, the experience of years had taught her to turn a deaf ear to at least half the utterances of Arline, when a mood of perversity was upon the girl. Arline's suggestion of a year in Europe had found an unexpected champion in Mrs. Brooke Lord.

"Mr. Leleu is a gentleman, Arline," she said. "Nobody has ever said a word against him, and Brooke thinks he is very clever."

"What does he do?" Arline asked, as she let go the curtain and allowed her hand to drop to her side.

"He is secretary to somebody or other. Brooke says, though, that people are beginning to have their eyes upon him."

"Then why has n't he been here to call before now?"

Mrs. Brooke Lord rose, crossed the room and picked up her engagement book.

"Because I never asked him," she said quietly, as she turned the leaves.

However, Arline pressed her question.

"Why not?"

"Because there never seemed any real reason that I should do so. Our set is rather full; one can't extend it indefinitely. Mr. Leleu has friends of his own."

Arline's tone sharpened again.

"And they, I suppose, are socially impossible, judged by the standards of Mrs. Brooke Lord."

Mrs. Brooke Lord hated sarcasm. Now she bit her lip. For her husband's sake, she would never cross swords with Arline. Moreover, there were hours when she loved the girl absolutely. For the sake of those hours, she had schooled herself to limitless patience.

"Not at all," she answered. "He is in the best of the French set. He is a nephew of Father Leleu, and a friend of half the Laval faculty and a third of the Liberal senators. Brooke says it is a rare thing for so young a man to be accepted in such high places."

"Then why don't you accept him?"

With deliberate care, Mrs. Brooke Lord made an entry or two in the book in her hand. Then she gave careless answer, —

"Really, I never bestowed on the matter any especial thought. Chiefly because he is French, I suppose."

"But you accept Monsieur St. Just," Arline said shortly.

"Yes; but he is from Paris."

"What difference does that make?" Arline asked even more shortly.

Mrs. Brooke Lord smiled, as if to herself.

"He has n't any corollaries," she replied. "Besides, he's Protestant."

"No; he's not," Arline contradicted. "Jimmy told me he's an out and out atheist."

"How tiresome! But, at least, he isn't Catholic," Mrs. Brooke Lord said tranquilly.

With a sudden sweep of her arm, Arline thrust apart the curtains and crossed the room to Mrs. Brooke Lord's side. Her cheeks were blazing again, her head held high, and she moved with the lithe, yet commanding tread of a panther.

"How narrow you are, Molly!" she burst out angrily. "I can't understand it; I hate it. You call yourself a Christian; you call yourself a friend of all mankind. And just because this man goes to the Basilica instead of the Cathedral, you grudge him a cup of tea and a biscuit. It's narrow, and it's petty and a disgrace to any woman." She swept her hands backward, then clasped them before her again with a swift, impetuous gesture. "No; don't try to explain it. It explains itself. You talk of the snobbery of London, and even of Montreal; but you outdo them both. There's not a man in Quebec, according to your own showing, better born, better bred, better to look at than Mr. Leleu, and yet he isn't fit to come into your house, because—" her accent stayed itself and became slow and cutting; "because he happens to have had the misfortune to be born a Catholic and French."

Some instinct of wishing to protect the girl from the judgment of her own kin led Mrs. Brooke Lord to raise her hand in warning, as Jimmy passed through the room. Arline was swift to interpret the gesture.

"No; I am not ashamed of my ground; I see no need to suppress it. I am not so narrow as that, so tied up in the leading-strings of my set." Then she faced about suddenly. "And what do you wish me to do, Molly? Shall I send the man a note, revoking my invitation to call, or —"

And Jimmy, as he passed on out of hearing, observed to himself, —

“When women fight, it’s a man’s place to hold up his hands and scuttle off to cover. It strikes me, though, that Arline has settled down to work in good season. Poor old Molly! But she is a darling, anyhow.”

Two hours later, Jimmy showed still further his knowledge of womankind. He met Mrs. Brooke Lord and Arline, as they were amicably shopping together in Fabrique Street, and he bowed to them without a hint of amusement or surprise. However, he admitted to himself that he was distinctly curious in regard to the nature of the welcome which would be accorded to Leleu, that afternoon. At heart, Jimmy shared the beliefs of Mrs. Brooke Lord. Leleu was all right and doubtless well worth the knowing. Still, there was no especial use in hybridizing one’s social set. To Jimmy’s mind, one’s teacups and dinner plates should always be marked with a Union Jack. At official functions, of course, it was different. There, one was bound to meet all sorts. But then, one was not responsible for the choice of one’s fellow guest; that lay on the knees of one’s host.

Nevertheless, although this was Leleu’s first invasion of the Conservative English set, there was neither hesitancy nor deprecation in his manner, as he crossed the room, halted to speak to his hostess and Arline and then, moved by some subtle sense that the social atmosphere was overcharged, passed on directly towards the table where Patience Tyler was pouring tea. He had met Patience a round dozen times before that day. He had not admired her especially; but he had enjoyed her unreservedly. Again and again, her outspoken directness had taken his breath away; but, when once more he had caught his breath, he found himself the better for the whiff of ozone. And, upon her side, Patience looked with full, albeit quite unsentimental approval upon this slender, dark-faced boy with the luminous eyes and mobile lips. He roused in her

no sense of spiritual recoil such as she never failed to experience in the society of Achille St. Just. Like many another self-reliant American girl, Patience Tyler owned a full system of moral weights and measures which she applied to the personality of the men she was accustomed to meet. More than that, she had formed the habit of talking over the resulting measurements with her older brother. Her dashing intuitions, coupled with his more sober judgment, offered no despicable standard of attainment; but Leleu, long since, had attained it to the full.

"I had no thought of finding you here, Miss Tyler," he said, as he paused before her tray.

"Oh, yes, I am always here. You know Mr. Lord, I think," Patience responded, with an easy disregard of the Canadian law of introductions. "You are the unexpected vision."

Leleu bowed in brief assent.

"It was Miss Lord who asked me."

"You knew her abroad, perhaps?"

"No; only here. No tea, thank you." And Leleu, bending down to help himself to a biscuit, lost Jimmy's expressive gesture and rapid comment, —

"Another proof of my theory of racial traits."

"So you don't think salvation lurks in tannin?" Patience queried, in a swift aside. Then she faced Leleu. "Mr. Leleu," she asked audaciously; "if you saw a Frenchman drinking a cup of tea, what would you think of him?"

And Amédée Leleu, all unwittingly, plunged into the heart of their previous discussion with his answering words, —

"That he was putting himself in training for the Conservative ministry."

Patience laughed. Then she lifted a warning hand.

"Take care, Mr. Leleu," she cautioned him. "They

won't let me talk politics here, at least nothing later than the epoch of Sir John. I can't quite understand the situation. You all do politics, every day and all day long; you all know politics from A to Izzard; but not a soul of you is allowed to mention the word *politics* in polite society on pain of death. If it is so bad as to be unmentionable, what makes you do it?"

Jimmy broke in, and his reply was trenchant.

"We don't. We leave it to the French."

Leleu smiled.

"Not always."

"Yes," Jimmy responded tranquilly. "We leave you fellows to do all the politics. We English only vote."

"What is the discussion?" Arline queried, as she came slowly towards the group.

"Politics," Patience said, as she picked up a fresh cup. "Your brother will tell you it is my standing grievance that I am not allowed to talk politics in this country."

"But it is so tiresome. Why should you care to talk about it?" Arline inquired, as she smiled up at Leleu who had brought forward a chair and handed her a cup of tea.

"Because it is so interesting. Stanwood and I have the best possible times, arguing it over at breakfast. He is a Conservative, of course; and I am a Liberal of scarlet dye, and we fight it all out together."

Jimmy possessed himself of another biscuit.

"And he calls you 'my dear,'" he commented; "and then you clatter the spoons at him. That's the worst of you women as adversaries. Just as a fellow thinks he has had the best of you and talked you down, you begin a most infernal row with your tea things and drown him out completely. I tell Brooke that, if Molly ever gets unmanageable, he'd best tackle her when she's tying up her shoes."

"But she could always throw a slipper at him."

Patience suggested. "And, when I go to talk Stanwood down, he rattles the paper at me, and that is as bad as the spoons."

"Worse, for it wrecks the paper, besides losing his place for him. But what ever turned you a Liberal, Miss Tyler?"

"Stanwood's Conservatism. There's no fun unless you get both sides of a thing. Just think how monotonous it would be, if we all thought alike!"

Arline sipped her tea with thoughtful relish.

"But don't you like to agree with people, Miss Tyler?" she asked, less from interest in the answer than from a feeling that Patience had been usurping too great a share of attention.

And Patience, as she glanced at the queenly composure of the figure in the dull blue gown, felt a wayward desire to jostle Arline from her placid mental groove.

"No; not until I have been argued into it," she replied, with a gay little nod up at Leleu who, on more than one occasion, had attempted that argument.

Arline caught the smile and the returning flash in Leleu's dark eyes. She set down her cup with a sharp click. Then she raised her golden-brown brows.

"Really? I don't care for argument, myself; it seems to me rather tiresome. Mr. Leleu, I want to show you some of my brother's old prints. Do you mind coming to the library?"

Followed by Leleu, she moved away through the emptying rooms. Left alone beside the table, Jimmy and Patience looked at each other, started to speak and then fell silent. At last, however, Patience laughed. At the sound, Jimmy's face cleared and he drew a sigh of frank relief.

"Hang it!" he said. "One can't well apologize for one's own people, Miss Tyler. Still, it does n't so much matter, after all. You'll get to know Arline in time."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE Tylers boarded on the Cape, within a stone's throw of the Governor's Garden. The house, among its ancient neighbours, seemed distressingly modern with its tiled vestibule and its small reception hall. Stanwood had chosen it, as soon as it had been decided that Patience was to come to him. He had been in the ancient city long enough to have had its picturesqueness lose somewhat of its pristine glamour. He had realized that Patience, coming, not as a tourist, but as a resident, would in time learn to share his belief that modern oxygen was preferable to the mustiness of ages. Accordingly, he had made unhesitating selection of the three front rooms on the second floor of a house which boasted modern ventilation and an occasional open fireplace, and he listened with unabated tranquillity, on the night of his sister's arrival, to her charge of undue Philistinism. When she had finished, he took his pipe from between his teeth.

"Hold your peace, Patsy, and go on with your unpacking. When you have eaten breakfast and seen the view from these windows, then you may continue talking." Then he rose and shut one arm around her waist. "Oh, Patsy girl," he added; "but it's good to have you here!"

And Patience, as she returned to her half-empty trunk, was supremely content. Next day, her contentment showed no diminution, while she leaned out of the window to wave a farewell to her brother as he rounded the corner by the Château, and then fell to work, settling their possessions in the airy, sunshiny library which separated her room

from that of Stanwood. Jimmy Lord, dropping in with a message from his brother, that same evening, had found the room in order and Stanwood busy with oysters and a chafing dish, while Patience, in a long, light frock, lounged by the fire, issuing directions in regard to the best quantity of salt. Jimmy, on his way to the Garrison Club, had rebelled at the idea of serving as his brother's messenger. Two hours later, he was pronouncing the evening a complete success, although the friends still awaiting him at the club were of another mind. The next day, Mrs. Brooke Lord had called; and, from that time onward, Stanwood Tyler had dismissed from his mind all anxiety in regard to his sister's happiness.

The Tylers came from Brookline. They owned a colonial governor and a Huguenot fighter among the ranks of their ancestry. Stanwood had gone from Cornell to Schenectady and thence to Quebec. Patience had followed him by the way of Smith. These two were the only children of the family; they had been peculiarly intimate from the days when Stanwood had given Shakespeare recitals before a select audience of an excited Patience and six passively attentive dolls. It had seemed quite a matter of course to all the Tyler kindred, then, that Patience, tiring of her parents' ceaseless wandering through Europe in search of a health which was already theirs, should go to join her brother in the northern city to which his profession had led him. Patience was self-reliant, and Stanwood was steadiness itself. For the rest, Mrs. Brooke Lord had offered her social services, and Patience's great-aunt Adams had received from her old school-fellow, Lady Russell, a satisfactory assurance concerning Mrs. Brooke Lord's social standing. Accordingly, Patience Tyler, sound of body and of nerve, with a head full of ideas and a trunk full of New York gowns, had found herself being driven up Palace Hill, one crisp October evening. Had

she but known it, that evening was destined to mark the line cutting her life sharply in two.

Nine months had passed since then, and the July sun was gilding the old gray city and turning the Levis heights to the hue of the darkest amethyst. All over the Cape and far out the Grande Allée, the houses showed themselves inhospitably closed and barred. The babble of the tourist was in the land, and the inhabitants had taken themselves out of reach of the camera, and the inquisitive eye, and the too eager brain which prides itself on being able to "do" the city between breakfast and luncheon, and have the afternoon left over for Sainte Anne and the Falls. The Lords had lingered late, that year, for the summer had been slothful in its coming. At length, however, they too had wearied of the pavements, and had betaken themselves to their summer cottage which was perched upon the bluff at the northern end of the Island.

Patience had expressed a decorous sorrow at their departure; yet, fond as she was of Mrs. Brooke Lord, the going did not leave her altogether desolate, and she felt no especial regret that business kept her brother in town through the entire summer. As a matter of course, she remained with him. She had come to Quebec for the sake of his company. Accustomed to the larger towns and the fiercer heats to the southward, she saw nothing especially formidable about a July in town, when July weather was merely temperate and when town meant a quiet corner looking out upon the ancient garden and upon the river beyond.

Now and then she went over to the Island for a day with the Lords. She enjoyed it; but she was invariably glad to see Stanwood come swinging up the path from the landing, ready to dine and carry her back to their own cosy quarters in town. She and Stanwood had known each

other for twenty-three years. As yet, they had never been forced to bridge an awkward pause between themselves. And with Arline, pauses were many. It had not taken Patience many weeks to construct a long list of subjects at which she was bound to shy, as a country-bred horse shies at a motor car. Shying, she was able to avoid a collision, and a collision with Arline, she felt, would be fatal to her later poise. Arline was undeniably charming; but, like a bit of dainty fur, her charm vanished speedily, so soon as she was rubbed the wrong way.

Mrs. Brooke Lord, however, Patience did miss acutely. She found a partial solace in the fact that almost daily some old friend of the Tylers registered at the Château; she found an even greater solace in the frequent visits of Jimmy Lord who led a peripatetic sort of existence, that summer, and made a point of dropping in at the Tylers,' each time he came up to town. There he lounged in the open windows of their cosy library, alternately talking politics with Stanwood and chaffing Patience; or he joined them in their evening saunter along the terrace; or, of a Sunday afternoon, carried off the brother and sister for a long drive to Lorette and home through the distant purple hills. And so the summer wore on and, as the long days loitered by, Patience Tyler's clear eyes looked into Jimmy's with the same frank liking they were wont to show to Stanwood or to Molly Lord. To Patience, just then, life was too full of interest to give her space for sentimental musings. Her liking for Jimmy was as objective as was her curiosity regarding the brown-cowled, bare-footed Franciscan friar who rubbed elbows with her on one of her daily walks out the Grande Allée.

She met Leleu often, in the course of these walks. With the first breath of summer, he had gone into camp with some friends in the mountains back of Lorette. His duties called him to the Parliament Buildings, however,

two or three times a week, and, in the late afternoons, his path was likely to cross the path of Patience. Usually he lingered a little to talk to her; once or twice he had turned to walk along by her side. When they had parted, Patience had been conscious of the smile which curved her own lips; but her amusement had been wholly free from bitterness. She liked Leleu absolutely; nevertheless, she was quite willing he should focus his talk absolutely upon Arline. Her one regret lay in Arline's own attitude, in the careless fashion in which the girl spoke of the attentions that, only an hour before, she had been receiving with every mark of gracious pleasure.

"Arline is my present problem," Patience said to her brother, one night.

"Unsolved?" he queried, as he leaned out of the window to flit the ash from the bowl of his pipe.

Patience wrinkled her brows. Then she folded her arms on the sill and spoke with her eyes fixed upon the moonlit spaces between the trees in the garden below.

"She always will be. She is charming — sometimes. She is beautiful — always. She is Jimmy's sister, and sister-in-law to Mrs. Brooke Lord. I ought to like her, and I don't."

Her brother smiled at the flat, unmodified conclusion of her phrase.

"For any especial cause?" he inquired.

"Women always have a cause," she retorted.

"No; merely a reason, as a rule," he corrected her.

"And your cause?"

Patience's answer was as unexpected as it was prompt.

"Because, before I had known her a week, she pointed to a man on the terrace and told me that he had asked her to marry him."

With a rigid forefinger, Stanwood was prodding leisurely at the fresh tobacco in the bowl of his pipe.

"Very likely he had," he replied composedly.

Patience rumpled her hair, in token of her antagonism.

"But she had no business to tell of it, if he had," she objected.

"I'm not sure she had any business to tell of it, if he had n't. In a case like that, Patsy, it's worse to romance than it is to tell the truth."

"And bad enough to do either. We're supposed to have evolved a little since the day when our ancestors decorated themselves with a peplum of scalps," she answered, with spirit. "I've had no practice, Stan; but my theory is that a girl should take such things in all humility and make as little fuss about them as possible. Arline, to judge from her talk, has marched through life over a road paved with hearts in place of cobblestones and, what's more, she has kept an accurate account of the size and colour and softness of every single cobble on which she has ever set foot. I don't like it, Stanwood. It's not my way, and it's not the way of Mrs. Brooke."

"But Arline is different," he argued.

"How different?"

"Imperious. Alluring." He sought about vainly for the right word. "Oh, confound it, Pat, I can't define it; but you ought to know what I mean."

She faced him steadily, and there was a world of dignity in her dark eyes.

"No, Stanwood; I don't know at all."

The flaring match in his hand threw a sudden light across his face, and, as she saw his expression, Patience felt slightly reassured. He puffed twice or thrice, deliberately, luxuriously. Then he answered, —

"Why, Arline is the sort of woman who has the trick of ordering a fellow to love her, and making him feel it's not quite prudent to refuse. I've known her longer than you have, Pat. She's a queen in her charm; but —"

"Well? But?" she echoed questioningly.

Stanwood attacked his pipe with a pencil end, before he made leisurely answer, —

"But she's the very devil in her temper. After all, a woman is a good deal like a sword. She's bound to cut you before you're through with her; but, all the time, it's the temper that counts."

And Patience went to bed, that night, content. Stanwood's possible liking for another woman had held no place within her girlish dreams.

Two days later, she fulfilled a week-old promise to spend the day on the Island. On her way to the boat, she had met Leleu in the narrow wooden tunnel leading to the top of the elevator, and she had gone on her way, burdened with a message to Arline. The message, a mere formal assurance of Leleu's intention to call, had slipped from her memory in the flurry of greetings, and only recurred to her once more as they sat loitering through a leisurely luncheon. To Patience's mind, there was nothing indiscreet in repeating the message in the presence of Arline's family, and it was with some surprise that she saw the wave of angry scarlet rise up across the girl's face.

It was Jimmy, however, who spoke.

"Oh, Arline, spare us the Johnny!" he remonstrated.

"But I asked him to call," she said briefly, though the poise of her head added emphasis to the colour in her cheeks.

"Down here?"

"Certainly."

Jimmy folded his hands above the rim of his plate.

"Sufficient unto the winter is the Frenchman thereof. In summer, give us this day immunity therefrom," he observed piously.

Patience struck in before Arline had time to reply.

"I like Mr. Leleu," she said defensively.

Jimmy took another help of green peas.

"Everybody needs a few friends," he remarked, with dispassionate calm.

"And Mr. Leleu deserves many," Patience reminded him.

"Doubtless he has them."

Patience laughed.

"Evidently you don't count yourself among the number," she said.

"No ; I can't say I do."

"Why not?" she persisted, for she felt sure that Arline was about to ask the same question, and the glint in Arline's eyes made her regard it as safer for her to hold the talk well in her own hands.

Rapidly Jimmy sorted out the contents of his plate and made audible enumeration.

"Twenty-nine pretty little peas, ready to roll one way as well as another. One ugly great baked potato that refuses to budge." Then he looked up, smiling blandly. "Miss Tyler, once on a time, I spent a night in a country farmhouse. For breakfast, they gave us peas and potatoes cooked together, and the mixture was most unsavoury."

Arline pushed her plate aside, and beckoned to the servant.

"Take the plates, Ashley."

Even Mrs. Brooke Lord rebelled at this assumption of authority.

"But Jimmy is not ready, Arline," she remonstrated.

Arline glanced at her brother; then carelessly she turned her eyes away.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said. "I supposed he had finished eating and was only talking to pass the time." Then she turned to Patience. "Next time you see Mr. Leleu," she said, with quiet distinctness ; "please say to

him that the same welcome awaits him here as met him on the Grande Allée."

But Jimmy persisted in having the last word.

"And that," he added, with portentous gravity; "and that is most varied and cordial."

An hour later, however, Arline returned to the subject. Owing to the persistent efforts of Patience, it had been dropped from further discussion at the table. Helped by Jimmy, she had guided the talk into other lines and, by the time luncheon was over, Arline's cheeks had cooled to their more normal colour, her lips softened to their gentler curves. Then Mrs. Brooke Lord had gone away for her afternoon nap, and Jimmy had followed Patience back to the wide veranda looking out upon the river and the citadel-crested bluff beyond. Patience would have sat there, idly content, through the entire afternoon; but Arline, pacing restlessly to and fro, had ended by demanding a walk, and Patience had been forced to yield to the expressed wishes of her hostess. Her yielding was none too gracious, however, and Jimmy, as he sauntered away in the opposite direction, gave devout thanksgiving for her obvious ungraciousness.

"I can't think what makes Jimmy dislike Mr. Leleu so much!" Arline burst out, when they had passed the stile and were crossing the field in front of the little church on the hill.

Patience sought to modify the phrase.

"He does n't dislike him; that's only put on, to tease you. It's only that they haven't much in common."

"As much as any one. And it is so tiresome of Jimmy to tease. He's not a child."

"Neither are you," Patience longed to retort. Prudently she forbore, and changed the subject. "Are the races coming off, next week?" she asked, as she sat down on the

step of the church and turned to look back at the city, lying in a rosy haze above the glistening breast of the river.

Arline laughed shortly, and her laugh grated on Patience's ears.

"I suppose so. There's no reason they should not. Never mind the races, Patience, though I appreciate your effort to keep the talk away from dangerous channels. The best pilots, though," her smile was a bit sarcastic; "see to it that their steering gear does n't give too audible warning, when it goes into action. But about Mr. Leleu. Jimmy does n't like him, I suppose, because he is French and a Catholic. Really, though, I can't see what difference it all makes."

"He probably likes best to have his friends among men who share his opinions," Patience suggested, with a tameness of which she was quite well aware.

Arline's lip curled disdainfully.

"What difference? One does n't discuss such things."

"Why not?" Patience asked abruptly, for Arline's tone was bitter with contempt.

But Arline swept on, heedless of the interruption.

"Jimmy is narrow, distressingly narrow. It grows upon him. I suppose it comes from living with Molly. Molly has n't an idea that has n't been sanctioned by the utterance of some magnate of her father's set of friends. For myself, I should hate to be so bound down, so wrapped in the meshes of a net my ancestors had woven. And Jimmy is as bad." She broke off suddenly. "You like Mr. Leleu?" she asked.

"Certainly," Patience assented. "But then, I'm an American."

"What difference does that make?" Arline demanded impatiently.

Patience bent down and pulled a handful of grass from

the turf at her feet. The action hid the little smile that hovered about her lips.

"Merely that I have left my ancestral net at home in Boston," she replied demurely. "I was afraid the meshes would n't fit the fish up here."

Arline frowned. She suspected mockery; yet she was unable to detect its presence. She returned to her first theme. Though she spoke hotly, Patience's keen ear detected the cold ring of truth beneath the passing heat of her words.

"I like Mr. Leleu. I liked him at first. His being French makes no especial difference; he's not likely to try to convert me from the English church. Sometimes, I think, absurd as it seems, that that's what Jimmy is afraid of. Shocking bad form, you know," her voice dropped to Jimmy's lazy drawl; "perfectly shocking form to turn Catholic. Mr. Leleu is attractive; you know it, yourself, Patience. And yet, after all," she laughed slightly, and the laugh was steely hard; "after all, I should never have given the man a second thought, if Molly and Jimmy had n't made such a fuss when I asked him to call. That's the woman of me, I suspect. We only want our toys, when somebody tries to pull them away from us. Now what have I said to shock you, you young Puritan?"

Lifting her eyes, Patience made swift contrast between Leleu's eager face and voice as he sent his message to Arline, and the cold beauty of Arline's laughing face as she had spoken of her toys. Some sudden pity for the man dreaming rosy dreams in the rosy city across the channel gave her resolution to turn upon Arline with an accent of grave rebuke.

"Arline," she said quietly; "Mr. Leleu is not a toy."

Arline lifted her brows, and her violet eyes, albeit unsoftened, were lighted with merriment.

“Not for you, perhaps,” she retorted; “but he is for me—that is,” she rose and stood smiling down at the intent face of her companion; “for the present.”

And, still smiling, she turned about and led the way down the path towards the stile.

CHAPTER FIVE

AND there is always Sir Morris," Patience suggested hopefully.

"Rather! As long as I was making up the party for him," Jimmy assented. "That was one reason I'd have liked Brooke to be here."

"And he really must go?"

"Yes. He has some sort of an engagement in Ottawa. I tried to persuade him to wait over till the next day; but it would be easier to move Ararat than change Brooke's mind."

Patience laughed.

"Stanwood accomplished it, though. Your brother was determined he should go, too; but Stanwood told him he had this engagement for to-morrow night, and would follow him up, the next day."

"That's rather decent of Tyler," Jimmy commented. "One hates to have one's function go bad on one's hands."

"How many are there to be?" Patience asked idly.

"Six."

"Seven," Arline corrected him unexpectedly.

Jimmy whirled about on his heel.

"How do you make that out?" he asked.

Arline pulled from her belt the bunch of late sweet peas and nonchalantly twisted them this way and that in her hands.

"Four of you men, Molly, Patience and I," she replied.

"But Brooke is n't coming."

"I know." Arline's tone was still indifferent; but the

colour was rising in her cheeks. "And so I asked Mr. Leleu to go in his place."

"The deuce you did!" Jimmy said explosively.

"Yes. I met him in the Ring, this morning, and he asked if he might call, to-morrow night. Brooke had just failed you, and I thought the simplest thing was to ask Mr. Leleu to take his place."

Jimmy started to speak, checked himself, whistled instead; then said, with apparent mildness, —

"Did it ever occur to you, Arline, that this was my party?"

"Of course. Don't be statuesque, Jimmy; it is so foolish."

"And that it was done for Sir Morris?"

"Certainly. What has that to do with it?"

"Nothing; except that Leleu is a foreign element."

"So is Sir Morris," Patience broke in lightly.

"Yes; but this is to make him feel at home. Really, Arline, I wish you would consult me before —"

"Don't be overbearing, Jimmy. There was no time to consult you. Besides, there was no reason. You had been cross at Brooke because he wouldn't go; now you are cross at me because I have done my best to find a substitute to go in Brooke's place. Really, you are very unreasonable. Moreover, it is hardly polite to Patience, to discuss this matter before her," Arline concluded, with a swift dexterity in placing her brother upon the defensive.

This time, Jimmy fairly lost control of himself.

"Oh, by Jove, Arline, what a contrary thing you are!" he blurted out. "You knew it was my crowd, that I had asked it and all that, and that I don't like Leleu a little bit."

Arline snapped the heads from half a dozen of the sweet peas in her hand; but her voice was level, as she answered, —

"Of course, Jimmy, if you feel like that, I shall be glad to pay Mr. Leleu's share of the expense."

Jimmy took a hasty turn to the window and back, digging his hands, the while, deep into the side pockets of his short morning coat. Patience, watching him, judged that it was time to interpose. As a rule, she held her peace; but it was a rare thing for Jimmy Lord to lose his jovial, careless self-control.

"Who is Sir Morris, anyway?" she asked.

"I fagged for him at Eton," Jimmy replied briefly.

Patience repressed a smile. It was so like a man, she reflected, to take it out upon the unoffending woman. Nevertheless, she persisted in her effort to bring Jimmy back to his wonted mood of easy tolerance for all things.

"What is he doing here?" she asked again.

"Seeing the country and studying the natives."

"Oh, then he has literary aspirations," Patience commented promptly.

"No; I fancy not. He was an awful duffer at Eton, a good fellow enough and with a record in the boats later on. He did n't know syntax from syncope, though, and he licked me once for telling him to leave the *d* out of college, said a fag need n't put on such side." And Jimmy's ill temper vanished, as he chuckled over the long-gone episode.

Patience echoed his laugh.

"And now you're taking him to *Everyman*!" she said.

"Why not? It's mediæval enough, even for a baronet of sorts."

"Doubtless he would prefer *Charley's Aunt*," she suggested.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't know the lady."

"That shows your ignorance, for she has an inter-

national fame. She started with us ; but, the last I heard, she had been done into modern Greek."

Jimmy's face cleared.

"Then she'd be no good to Sir Morris. He was always getting into disgrace on his Homer. That's how I happened to be out of the sixth form ahead of him. In fact," Jimmy chuckled again ; "for all I know, he may be in the sixth form still, and just over here on a holiday."

But Arline broke in impatiently.

"Jimmy, are you ever coming ? I have an engagement at eleven. Were you coming out now, Patience ?"

Patience shook her head.

"I am going to run through *Mother Goose* and take a dip into *Alice*," she said, laughing. "According to your brother, to-morrow night's festivity is for the sake of making Sir Morris feel at ease among strangers, and it will be well to be ready to follow his conversational lead."

Arline smiled tolerantly. She liked Patience, in spite of her American sense of humour.

Later, as she walked away at Jimmy's side, some swift revulsion in her mood led her to treat his opinions with the courteous deference which, as a rule, she reserved for other men than her brothers. And Jimmy, as always, showed himself quick to forgive. Could the secret truth have been known, he was much more penitent for his brief showing of temper than was Arline for all the provocation she had heaped upon him ; and, in his penitence, he was ready to meet her overtures fully two-thirds of the way across. Moreover, it was never too easy for him to withstand Arline, when she clothed herself in the gentle charm of womanhood. At such times, her beauty dazzled him, and the caressing intonations of her voice blotted out all memory of the sharper accent of the hour before. And Arline, upon her own side, was wholly sincere. So long as

her friends bowed to her arrogant will, she gave them a fervid affection.

Just as she parted from Jimmy at the corner of Louis Street, she half paused and held out her hand.

"I'm sorry I was cross, Jimmy," she said, with a certain grave dignity which sat well upon her. "I was tired and irritated and a bit unreasonable. No. Let's not speak of it again," she went on, interrupting him as he was about to reply. "It's over; there's no use in going back to it. The thing for us to do now is to make Sir Morris have the best possible time, to-morrow night." She turned away; then she added casually and over her shoulder, "I suppose Sir Morris is the genuine thing."

And Jimmy stayed his own steps long enough to answer, —

"Why, really, Arline, I never stopped to ask."

Then he betook himself up Louis Street to the club, while Arline crossed the Ring on the way to Fabrique Street and the shops.

The next night, the Tylers were the last ones to appear in the box at the Auditorium. As was his way in society, Stanwood was immaculate, grave, impenetrable. Patience, on the other hand, was daintily alert, curious in regard to Sir Morris whom she had not yet seen, and nervous in regard to the attitude which it might please Arline to assume. Mingled with her nervousness was a distinct sense of pity for Leleu, innocent and ignorant cause of all the dissension. The young Frenchman, in these autumn days, was looking upon the situation quite simply. Secure in the knowledge of his own family and social position, it never once had occurred to him that the Brooke Lords were receiving him with a mental reservation. To Arline he had given frank, manly evidence of his regard for her. She had met him cordially, had accepted his calls and his occasional boxes of flowers, and, from the first, she had

made no effort to check his growing devotion. Leleu's code was simple to the verge of ancient chivalry. Watching Arline, he had felt no doubts of the final outcome of their friendship.

Rather to her surprise, Patience found Leleu seated in the corner of the box, behind Mrs. Brooke Lord's chair, and Arline devoting herself to Sir Morris with an exclusiveness of attention which vouchsafed no fraction of its entirety to the crestfallen young Frenchman. Patience's quick eye took in the scene at a glance: the droop of Leleu's lip, the shadow in his dark eyes, the brave effort he made to hold his mind upon the kindly nothings which Mrs. Brooke Lord was babbling into his listless ears. It was plain that something had hurt him to the quick; and Patience, as she greeted Arline, felt no doubt at all as to the nature of that something. Arline was dazzling, that night. Her gown of some clinging black stuff served as a foil for her queenly figure and for the radiant colour of her hair and eyes. Only a sapphire-studded chain broke the simple lines and brought an added tint into the dark blue eyes above. Arline's face, that night, was vividly content, and her contentment was based upon the manifest admiration of Sir Morris. Of one point, Patience assured herself swiftly. There was no touch of coquetry in Arline's absorption in the tall young Englishman. Her forgetful disregard of Amédée Leleu was as sincere as it was obvious. For the hour, the Frenchman was completely out of the running.

Turning her brother over to the care of Mrs. Brooke Lord, Patience took advantage of the little stir which had greeted their coming, to possess herself of the chair next the one where Leleu had been sitting. Her intuition proved to be correct. Leleu dropped down at her side, with a heedless indifference which betrayed the fact that, Arline elsewhere, it mattered little to him who occupied

her place. Until the curtain rose, it needed all the tact and determination of which Patience was mistress to lure him out of his moody silence. She persevered, however, for she liked Leleu and, under the critical eyes of Mrs. Brooke Lord and Jimmy, she felt that it was imperative for him to appear at his best. Since that summer day on the Island, Patience had been wont to mount the defensive, whenever Leleu's name was mentioned. It seemed to her, now and then, as she thought the matter over, that it was a bit unfair of Arline to insist upon introducing this alien element to their lives, to force him upon the notice of her family and upon their hospitality, and then leave to another the task of speaking in his praise. Patience could never fully determine whether Arline lacked the courage of her convictions, or merely the convictions themselves.

The introductions over, Sir Morris had once more settled himself at Arline's side; and Patience, in her absorbing interest in Leleu, scarcely vouchsafed a glance in the direction of the stranger, until the rising of the curtain freed her from the necessity for further talk. The attention of the others went directly to the actors. Patience, however, had become so familiar with the quaint old morality play that, at the first, it fell upon unheeding ears. She merely settled back in her chair, smiled across at Jimmy, glanced at the stage, at the house and then, rather as an afterthought, at Sir Morris.

And yet, after all, Sir Morris Plante was well worth a second glance. He was a huge blond boy with pink cheeks and clean blue eyes and broad shoulders. Still in the early twenties, he was as simple and direct as a child. He was happy, and he showed it. He was eager and enthusiastic, and he showed that, too. What he did not show, however, Patience was shrewd enough to suspect: that he would be hot-tempered and outspoken, but loyal to the point of absolute self-annihilation. Of his sense of

humour, she felt some doubt. For the rest, he was Sir Morris Plante, late of London, and his haberdasher was an artist of sorts. And then the grave contralto voice of *Everyman* broke in upon her attention, and in the simple tragedy, old, yet ever new, she forgot the rest.

A stir in the box aroused her, and mechanically she followed the example of Mrs. Boooke Lord and rose to her feet. Jimmy came forward with her cloak, while Sir Morris deftly folded Arline's fur-lined wrappings about her.

"Jolly little theatre you've got here," he observed then; "but, by Jove, I don't see what your play was driving at."

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a bit like one of the Dean's sermons," he made comment; "takes a point we'd all like to forget, hammers it in from all sides and then clinches it so it can't get away."

Stanwood Tyler drew a long breath of satisfaction.

"Morals, yes; but the acting is superb. It is one of the best things I have ever seen."

But Leleu still lingered, looking out across the empty stage. The corners of his mouth drooped heavily, and shadow was in his eyes. When at last he spoke, unknown to himself, his words were French.

"Ah," he said; "it is a leaf from the world-book of tragedy."

And Patience, as she followed Mrs. Brooke Lord out to the foyer, felt that each man's comment had revealed somewhat of his true nature.

Later, they gathered in an informal group about the two end tables at Valiquet's, just beneath the crossed flags which covered the rearmost wall. Mrs. Brooke Lord had protested against this unconventional supper party, had begged that it might be in her house, or at least at the Château; but Jimmy had held firm to his resolution. He

knew Sir Morris of old ; he knew why Sir Morris had come to Quebec ; he knew what Sir Morris would like. Accordingly he had telephoned down for the two end tables to be reserved for their coming, and he had taken pains that Sir Morris should be seated with his back to the flags, looking out across the gay bevy of dainty little French girls and their escorts who supped and chattered about the other tables.

The place had been full, when they entered. Arline, gay, bewitching, yet imperious, had walked down the long room, with a manifest disregard of the admiring glances which met her from all sides. Patience had followed, nodding to an acquaintance here and there, returning their salutations with a gay good-humour which made Sir Morris, close in the rear, register a hasty impression that, after all, the American girl was the right sort, even if she lacked the more dazzling charm of the sister of his old-time fag. She was not much on looks, he reflected ; but she knew how to dress and she seemed a jolly little soul that a fellow would like to talk to, when the steamer came in without any home letters. Then, as he saw Arline fumbling with the clasps of her cloak, he stumbled over Patience's train, mumbled an apology as he edged past her, and then once more forgot her presence entirely.

And, meanwhile, the groups about the other tables paused in their supper and their talk, and gazed with frank admiration at Arline, frank curiosity at Sir Morris, frank interest at the others, the Tylers and Mrs. Brooke Lord and Jimmy. Last of all in line came Leleu, his lips still drooping, his eyes heavy with shadow ; and, as he passed, his coming was greeted with swift raising of the brows, with low-voiced wonder and question and comment. It was no common thing for a man so distinctively French in all his affiliations as was Leleu to be eating supper at Valiquet's with a party which otherwise was wholly of the

English set. From one end to the other of the French set of the city, Leleu was known and liked. Accordingly, his actions were sure to be subject to comment. Up to that time, no one of his friends, and there were numbers of them in the room, had had an inkling that Amédée Leleu was ever known to mingle in the other life. He knew the Tylers, of course; but they were Americans, and every one in town knew them. He had been seen on the terrace and out on the Grande Allée, walking with Arline; but that might have been by chance. There was no possible element of chance, however, in his eating supper at Valiquet's, at a table presided over by Jimmy Lord. And the fact that he looked a low-spirited mute at a funeral feast had no bearing on the subject whatsoever.

At length, Sir Morris pushed aside his plate, meditatively pulled at the string of his eyeglass until it came into view above his immaculate linen, and fitted the glass into his eye with that total lack of facial distortion which is at once the jest and the admiration of all un-English peoples. He took a prolonged and thoughtful survey of the room; then, lifting one eyebrow, he permitted the glass to fall into his lap, as he turned to Arline.

"Ripping girls you have here," he commented briefly. "Who are they all?"

Arline's lips curled slightly and she raised her own brows, as she made answer, low, but loud enough for Leleu to hear, —

"Oh, they are all French Catholic girls, pretty, as you say; but I have no idea who they are. One never meets them out anywhere, you know."

And in his room at the Château, that night, Sir Morris Plante recorded his first note regarding the dominant race in Canada.

CHAPTER SIX

ACHILLE ST. JUST pulled down the top of his desk, snapped the key in the lock and transferred the key to his pocket. Then he looked at his watch.

"Four o'clock. I will go for a walk to make myself an appetite for Mrs. Brooke Lord's dinner," he said aloud. Then, with a glance about the room, he went out and closed the door behind him.

Up-stairs, the presses were still pounding, for the news of a railway accident in the States, coming late, had rendered a second edition of the *Cartier* imperative. Down the stairs behind him, a foreman was hurrying towards the office, the long yellow galleys fluttering in his hands and his intent face lined across with a smudge of printer's ink.

"Monsieur!" he called. "Monsieur St. Just!"

But St. Just waved his hand towards the office.

"Monsieur Allard is within. Speak to him," he bade the foreman. Then he passed out into the street.

In front of him, the old gray Basilica rose commandingly, its one tall spire dyed to a pinkish purple in the light of the dropping sun. On the pavement just inside its high iron fence, a bevy of English sparrows held congress in shrill, insistent tones, pausing now and again to cock up their heads and gaze superciliously out at the passers in the street. St. Just, halting on the curb to light a cigarette, shared somewhat of their superciliousness, as he watched one man and then another lift his hat devoutly when he came opposite the great central door leading to

the nave and the high altar beyond. The first was a gentleman, elderly and pompous ; the second was a man from the markets, capped and clothed in shabby fustian.

"All alike!" St. Just muttered to himself. "All these people are superstitious ; they have no brain nor reason. They follow their priesthood as sheep follow the bellwether." He shrugged his shoulders. "For me, when I bow outside of any door, it will be the one on the Grande Allée, or else across the way." And he glanced over at the gray bulk of the City Hall which marked the western boundary of the ancient market square. "It is the artistic ending of the place," he added, still to himself. "Once the Jesuit Barracks looked over the market place ; now it is the Hôtel de Ville. What would you have? In the end, Church must always yield to State. In France we are learning the lesson ; but here, bah ! These Canadians pin their beliefs to the hem of the priestly soutane and march onward, always a step in the rear of their leader." Then he tossed his burnt-out cigarette into the midst of the congress of sparrows, lighted another and, turning up Du Fort Street, came out upon the end of the terrace.

Just behind the Champlain statue, he met Leleu who, tired with his long day in the Parliament Buildings, had also sought the terrace for a breath of fresh air and a glimpse of his kind. It had been one of the warm, mellow days that come now and then, even in the Canadian October. The trees in the Ring were shorn of their leaves ; but the setting sun lay yellow on the terrace and turned the Beauport flats to a sheet of sapphire, the Levis heights to a purplish flame. Already the lower town was in shadow, save for the dome of the custom house and the square, ugly bulk of the elevator near by. These, catching a glint of sunshine on their lofty tops, formed the high lights of a soft gray picture. In a sense, it was a bit of allegory :

the aged, straggling town dominated by these emblems of commercial enterprise, lifting themselves from the gray uncertainty of the Canadian dawn into the full sunlight of its ripened day. Beyond was the basin and the St. Charles, and, beyond again, the long white stripe of village which stretches in an unbroken line from the beginning of the Beauport flats on and on to the very foot of Cap Tourmente at the end of the purple distance.

Leleu, passing along by the Château wall, was heedless of the people about him. He returned their greetings with mechanical punctiliousness; but his face failed to lighten. To one watching, it was plain that his last night's mood was still upon him. His day's work done, he had escaped from the solitude of his office to the crowd on the terrace; but the crowd would bring him scanty satisfaction. In his office and over his desk, he had thought of Arline continually. On the terrace, he realized too late, he would find no distraction in the throng, save when some tall figure in the distance sent his heart into his larynx, with the idea that it might be Arline. In fact, although he had been unwilling to admit it, even to himself, it had been the vague hope of meeting Arline which had brought him out to the terrace. Instead, at the back of the Champlain statue, he met Achille St. Just.

In his ordinary mood, Leleu would have felt no desire for the society of St. Just. Now that society was doubly repugnant to him. There was no escape, however. Before Leleu had grasped the fact of the other man's presence, St. Just had greeted him and familiarly linked his arm in that of Leleu.

"What is it?" he queried gayly, as he turned himself and Leleu up the terrace which was full of idlers, loitering there as if to bid farewell to the last belated bit of summer.

"What do you mean?" Leleu asked briefly.

St. Just laughed.

"My dear fellow, you look as if you had buried all your kin," he explained. "It is long since I have spoken to you, and I was sure of a grand gossip. Instead, I find you with your face all awry. Have you had bad news?"

Leleu shook his head. Then he roused himself and, remembering St. Just's egotism, he sought to turn him into another train of thought which should be more savoury to them both.

"And you?" he queried. "Are you prospering?"

St. Just shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he answered whimsically. "The *Cartier* has gone to press, and it still continues to sell, in spite of its narrow policy. Now and then I sharpen my pen and add a dash of vinegar to my ink, and then it sells the better. In time, perchance, I shall use a stiletto and dip it in some biting acid, and then we shall see. But now it is not too bad, nor yet too good. You Canadians are sluggish of blood, chilled by your snows and fettered by your priestly traditions."

Leleu, in turn, shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you? The tradition is good. Its power is evident. Then why throw it off?"

St. Just gave an expressive glance at the citadel above his head.

"There are other traditions and other powers," he observed sententiously.

For some unfathomable cause, Leleu felt irritated. The words were simple. The tone was fraught with meaning.

"Other, but weaker," he retorted sharply. "Look at the city, the province. The rod is English; but it is wielded by French hands and, year by year, those hands grow stronger."

St. Just nodded a familiar greeting to an English senator. Then he said lightly, —

“Dreams, my dear Leleu. You think of a return, perhaps, to the old régime; but it is impossible. Even in Paris, we have ceased to hope it.”

“And we in Canada have never wished it,” Leleu answered curtly. “The shadow never moves backward on the dial. It is of no return to the old régime that we dream; but of a régime which shall be wholly new.”

Again St. Just nodded familiarly, this time to a lawyer of provincial fame. Leleu supplemented the nod with a deferential bow.

“And that?” St. Just queried, while he let go Leleu’s arm in order to light his third cigarette.

“And that,” Leleu’s voice dropped over the words; “that shall be wholly Catholic and wholly French.”

St. Just tossed aside his match and snapped his fingers.

“A fig for your Catholic and a fig for your French, my dear fellow! Your new régime is upon you, and permanent. It is wholly English and wholly Protestant. What is more, it is bound to endure.”

Leleu’s thin lips straightened.

“We outnumber them,” he said, with crisp brevity.

“And what good are your numbers? A little local legislation, perhaps; but that is all. What have you back of it? Nothing. What have they? An empire.”

Leleu pointed to the scarlet spot above the King’s Bastion.

“And so had we an empire, when our army lowered its colours from that very staff. Empires change; but the spirit of empire outlasts its form.”

St. Just threw the end of his cigarette over the rail, then felt in his pockets for box and matches.

“You are epic, my dear Leleu. Why waste your breath on a smoked-out pipe?”

Leleu's dark face flushed in hurt anger. He had spoken earnestly, and his earnest convictions, he felt, were no fit subject for ridicule. The lazy scorn in his companion's tone cut him to the quick.

"The papal church is no exhausted power," he answered a little sullenly.

St. Just laughed.

"Perhaps. It is hard to say. At least, it is exhausted in France, however."

"But not in Canada."

"Who knows? But, even if we grant its power, and I do not, you are walking in a circle and, before you know it, you will be treading on my heels. Unless you throw away all logic, you Canadians, you will have to admit that your contest for a new régime leaves out France entirely, and merely becomes a test of strength between Rome and England, between Church and State. Each will pull its hardest, and I—" he laughed lightly; "and, in the end, I shall add my little strength to the pull of the stronger."

"And that," Leleu said shortly; "will be the Church."

"I doubt it. The chances are not even. England, the State, has its own church; Rome, the Church, must build its state."

"And that," Leleu said shortly again; "here in Canada will be the French."

St. Just shrugged his shoulders and threw back his head.

"As you will," he answered gayly. "French or English, it matters little to me. I have put to sea in an open boat, and, though rowing sharply, I have lashed my rudder in order to follow the current."

A bit perversely, Leleu allowed his words to fall on a silence, and the silence lasted from the statue to the middle of one of the five kiosks. Then St. Just spoke again.

"And, apropos of drifting with the current, Leleu, I was at Valiquet's, last night."

This time, Leleu's flush was wholly of anger.

"What of that?" he demanded.

St. Just laughed shortly.

"Merely that they say Brooke Lord has his eye on the forestry legislation."

"What of that?" Leleu demanded again.

"Merely that Brooke Lord can afford to buy whatever it pleases him to wish."

Then Leleu's eyes blazed.

"What a devil you are, St. Just!" he burst out angrily. "Miss Lord had asked me to meet Sir Morris Plante. No decent Frenchman would have a head for such beastly slanders as yours."

"No decent Frenchman should be wholly an innocent," St. Just retorted, with epigrammatic brevity. "Believe me, Leleu, it may be the glove of Mademoiselle Lord you are pressing in your eager fingers; but it is her brother's hand that is within. But, tell me, are you dining there, to-night?"

"I am not."

"Strange. Sir Morris is to be there, and I hoped to meet you, too. Or has Mademoiselle Lord turned wayward, perhaps? You are going? Not one more turn? Then *au revoir*, and pleasant dreams of your new régime!" And St. Just turned away down the terrace, while Leleu mounted the steps and crossed the road into the Governor's Garden, on his way to his room on Haldimand Hill.

From the windows of the Tylers' library, Jimmy watched him, and he felt a sudden pity for the listless droop of the man's whole figure.

"Do you know, he's not so bad a fellow," he said, with thoughtful, grudging approval.

Patience left her tray to care for itself and joined Jimmy in the window.

"That is exuberant praise. Do you mean Mr. Leleu?" she asked, as her eyes followed Jimmy's glance.

"Yes, poor chap. He looks down on his luck."

"And, like a true Briton, you pity the under dog?" she queried. "At least, I am glad of your conversion, even if it is tardy."

Jimmy held up a warning hand.

"Now don't say 'I told you so,'" he begged. "Fact is, there's no conversion. It's not the man I hate so much as it is his creed."

"But if he is sincere?" Patience objected.

"Can't help it. I'm Church of England," he argued.

"And I'm Unitarian," she retorted. "You two ought to join hands and leave me out. Nevertheless, I'd rather be a loyal Catholic than a shaky Protestant, and —"

"And?" Jimmy queried lazily.

"And Mr. Leleu is loyal to the bottom half of his soul," she concluded hotly.

At the farther side of the room, Sir Morris caught her final words.

"That's another of your Americanisms," he said to Arline a little plaintively. "At home we say tapped; but out here you talk about getting your boots half-soled."

"I'm no American, Sir Morris," she reminded him.

"But you live in America," he told her, with an odd little accent of kindly explanation.

"In Canada," she corrected him. "Here we leave the other name to the States. It seems to go with the croaking eagle and the flapping flag."

Jimmy turned about and faced them.

"Be careful of your eagle, Arline," he warned her. "You'll have him cawing next. It's only the niggers

that jump Jim Crow. Miss Tyler's ancestors merely plucked the tail feathers out of a bald eagle and mounted them in their hats. Left bare at both extremities, no wonder the poor thing shrieks a bit now and then."

But Patience interrupted him.

"You've had too much sugar in your tea," she admonished him pointedly.

"Do you know," Sir Morris addressed the room at large; "I can't seem to get hold of your political situation here."

Leleu had disappeared around the corner, and Patience went back to her tray.

"That's not peculiar to you, Sir Morris," she reassured him, as she seated herself.

"You think not? Then I'm not such a duffer, after all, perhaps," he answered a little eagerly. "Did you find it bad, too, when you first came?"

"Impossible," she said gravely. "In fact, I am only beginning to grasp it now. Will you have another cup?"

But Sir Morris, too absorbed in his subject to reply, merely waved a dissenting hand.

"And what do you make of it now?" he demanded.

A naughty light came into the eyes of Patience.

"That the Liberals talk faster and the Conservatives louder," she responded, as she held out her hand for his empty cup.

"Oh, Miss Tyler, what a beastly thing to say!" Jimmy remonstrated. "We Conservatives are not so noisy. We just shut our teeth and do things."

"Exactly." Sir Morris spoke with sudden interest. "But what is it that you do?"

"The usual things, I suppose: commerce and labour and public lands. Ask Miss Tyler. I'm no politician, only a Conservative voter, you know."

Patience laughed.

"I can sum it up in a word, Sir Morris," she said gayly. "It is Conservative to be English."

"And what about the Liberals?" he asked, in some perplexity.

"Oh, they are the other thing."

"And moreover," Jimmy added; "they spend all their days downing the very thing that we want most."

But Sir Morris harked back to Patience's explanation.

"And so," he asked; "all the fellows I'm meeting here are Conservatives?"

"Yes," Jimmy assented carelessly; "or it amounts to that."

Sir Morris shook his blond head.

"But, do you know, I'd rather like to meet some of the other sort," he observed.

"Mr. Leleu is a Liberal," Arline suggested quietly.

"Leleu? The fellow with us, last night? But he does n't look — oh, the other sort of thing, you know," Sir Morris answered, in some surprise.

"He's not." Arline spoke with sudden decision. She liked Sir Morris; nevertheless, his accent irritated her. She could see no reason that he should develop a share of the general antipathy to Leleu. To her surprise, Jimmy ranged himself upon her side.

"Leleu's not a bad fellow," he said. "He is no end well born and that, and they say he is a man who will bear watching."

"Spoons?" Patience interpolated, with perfect outward gravity.

"No; his career," Jimmy explained, with the literalness which assailed him at times. "The only things against him are his religion — he's Catholic —"

Sir Morris interrupted him incredulously.

"That fellow! Believes in the Virgin, and uses a rosary, and all those things!"

Again Arline spoke, and her voice was sharper.

"Why not?" she demanded. "At least, he is sincere."

Jimmy ignored the accent on the pronoun.

"No reason; only it is a bit out of our line."

Arline shut her hands together impatiently.

"Then the more shame to us for our narrowness."

"It's not narrowness exactly," Jimmy argued, his hands in his pockets. "It's only that we're not so used to it. As a rule, it does n't get into our set."

Arline rose and crossed the room to the window where she paused, tapping her fingers against the pane.

"Then it is time our set broadened," she said abruptly.

Jimmy laughed.

"It's broadening fast enough as it is. And, when you come right down to the fact of it, Arline, you know you'd never care to come into close quarters with the Catholics."

His words, carelessly spoken, sent the scarlet blood into his sister's cheeks. She turned to face him, and her dark blue eyes were blazing angrily.

"Your assertions are too sweeping, Jimmy," she replied haughtily. "As far as my own likings are concerned, it makes no difference at all to me whether a man is Catholic or Protestant."

Sir Morris opened wide his frank blue eyes. As a rule, the women he had known in society were prone to have their nerves under better control than this. He made a ponderous effort at a joke.

"Or a Liberal?" he asked.

She whirled about and faced him, and he felt his colour come, as he met her angry eyes. Patience sought to intervene; but it was too late.

"Or a Liberal," Arline answered him. Then there came into her voice the ring of defiant scorn, as she went on, "The chief difference between the parties here, Sir Morris, is this: the Conservatives work for the glorification of

English society, and the Liberals toil for the real advantage of the country." She stooped to pick up her sable collar which had fallen to the floor. "Come, Jimmy," she added coldly. "It is time we were going home. I promised Molly I would see about the flowers." And, with a curt nod of farewell, she was gone.

Sir Morris, as he walked away to the terrace, was thoughtful, and his thoughts were on Arline. At length, he summed them up aloud and briefly.

"Beastly form to get red in the face over a thing like that!" he observed. And then, quite irrelevantly, he wondered who would sit next to Patience at dinner, that night.

And meanwhile Leleu, in his room on Haldimand Hill, was sitting with his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands. For the hour, his thoughts were not of Arline, nor yet of Patience. He was regretting, to the core of his honest, loyal soul, the exceeding frankness with which his momentary depression had led him to speak to Achille St. Just. Some men are born to receive confidence ; others only desire it. Of those others, St. Just was a type.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ABOVE the fountain in the Ring, the snow lay heaped in an irregular cone. The Grande Allée was comparatively clear; but down in St. Sauveur, the packed roadways were on a level with the second-story windows, and the sidewalks mere narrow tunnels which rose at the crossings like a species of stile whose steps were chiselled in the solid ice. Across the terrace, the long toboggan slide stretched down from high on the glaci; and by night its close lines of electric lamps showed a jovial, albeit motley throng of humanity, so bundled in coats of blanket and coon and curly black lamb that their caste distinctions were wellnigh obliterated. The river was a sea of floating cakes of ice, driven hither and thither by the ebb and flow of the tide, now uniting in a level sheet, now shattered by the bows of the plucky little ferry-boats that crunched their way to and fro across its grinding surface. The skies were cold and gray, or barred by streaks of watery sunshine, and the distant Laurentides had turned from blue to silver beneath their high-piled heaps of snow. Christmas had come and gone, and January and mid-winter were upon the land.

To Patience, accustomed to the chilly dampness of the New England coast, winter seemed the crowning glory of the Quebec year. Capped with a fur-bound toque, the collar of her seal jacket turned up about her ears and her fists plunged deep inside her muff, she revelled in cold and storm, railing loudly, the while, at the local matrons who either made themselves into unsightly bundles of wraps

and overstockings and things they called creepers, or else remained at home in the stuffy atmosphere behind their double windows. No matter what was the day, Patience was sure to be abroad. She walked and drove ; she defied the morgue-like air of the rink until she became an expert curler ; she learned to manage her own toboggan on the big slide at Bureau's, and her soft white blanket suit with its dashes of scarlet and black was generally to be seen far towards the van of the procession, when the snowshoe club went out for a run across the windy Cove Fields and the Plains beyond. Trim, dainty, happy and wellnigh indefatigable, she was the constant centre of a shifting throng, and, in the heart of the throng, there were two unshifting factors, Jimmy Lord and Sir Morris Plante.

And Patience accepted their society quite as a matter of course, let them tie on her snowshoes and hand her her broom and carry her toboggan up the steps, all with an off-hand good-fellowship which bespoke her perfect willingness to perform a similar service for them. Then she went home and, above their chafing-dish, she talked it all over with Stanwood whose professional work, that winter, left him scant time for any but the more perfunctory duties of his social life.

Of Arline, she saw surprisingly little. The death of an ancient aunt had debarred Mrs. Brooke Lord from entertaining, that season. Patience dropped in often at the house on the Grande Allée ; but, as a rule, she went directly to Mrs. Brooke Lord's sitting-room, and lingered there until it was time to hurry away, with only a brief word to Arline in the hall below. Arline had never cared for the winter sports of the place ; so, for the most part, the two girls met only at some social function, or when, once or twice a week, Arline dropped in at the Tylers' library for a cup of tea and a welcoming word. And beside the teatray, in these latter days, were always her

brother Jimmy or else Sir Morris Plante, and, drawn up before the blazing fire, as an invariable adjunct of the scene, were the knitting work and cap and shoulder shawl of Madame Hawkins-Smith whom Patience had seen fit to annex of late as a sort of supernumerary chaperon.

"I can't turn the boys into the cold streets, such weather as this," she had observed to Stanwood, one night. "Madame Hawkins-Smith is right here in the house; she hates Jimmy, and she is a shocking gossip. All in all, I think she is as formidable a bodyguard as I could have, and, poor soul, she has Bat Chop tastes on a green-tea income. It's a *quid pro quo* on both sides, and it's worth the *quo* to see Jimmy's face, when he hands her her cup."

Arline, that winter, was a mystery, even to herself; and the mystery concerned itself wholly with her attitude towards Amédée Leleu. As a matter of sentiment, the young Frenchman suited her entirely. He was courteous, kindly, distinctly lovable. His tact and devotion never failed him; for long months, he had been quietly subordinating his every wish to the pleasure of Arline, and it was impossible for any girl, however wayward and cold, to disregard his steady loyalty. And Arline, however wayward, was not cold. Weigh and reason as she would, the value of her preliminary calculations was usually lost by a swift wave of emotion which swept her far out to sea from the prudent headland where she had taken her stand, so far that she could regain her former position with neither dignity nor safety. One such wave had seized her, the day she had assured Jimmy, in the hearing of Sir Morris, that Leleu's Catholicism counted for naught in her eyes. Afterwards, she had been too proud to retract her statement. Rather than that, she had chosen to modify her attitude to Leleu into agreement with it. And then another wave had come, and yet another. And always, as she emerged

from them, she saw Leleu before her, smiling a little, as he held out a beckoning hand. Of all her friends, that fall and winter, Leleu alone had never once aroused the opposition of her imperious nature. It was not that he was anæmic, however; it was merely the result of his unswerving, generous devotion, of his tact which gave him the instinct to avoid all points of possible antagonism.

Now and then, however, usually when she had been at some function from which the French element was conspicuously lacking, Arline's intellect asserted itself and warned her of possible points of danger upon which she was inevitably drifting. It assured her that Leleu, as a man, was above criticism; but that Leleu, as a Catholic Frenchman, was encumbered with a fringe of corollaries. As time went on, these corollaries became more insistent; their very insistence bore witness to the increasing hold which Leleu was gaining upon her life. She realized this to the full, and she usually set herself to work to give her intellect full sway. The end of the mood was unvarying and wellnigh inevitable. A chance word to Jimmy or to Mrs. Brooke Lord brought up the subject of Leleu, and their half-veiled antagonism to the thought of his connection with Arline roused Arline's own antagonism to the very dictates of her intellect. From her tiny childhood, Arline had never yielded to opposition. It merely strengthened her will to accomplish her end at any price, at any sacrifice. Had Jimmy Lord but known it, he was the most potent factor, just then, in determining the equation of his sister's life; and next to Jimmy in potency were the occasional workings of Arline's own intellect.

Nevertheless, Arline's sense of attraction towards Leleu was emotional, not passionate. Leleu was the most enjoyable man upon her present horizon, not the most enjoyable man she ever had met, or ever could meet. Had he been an inconspicuous member of her own social set, albeit

endowed with the same personality, she would scarcely have vouchsafed him a second thought. Regarded as an outsider, received among them upon sufferance, she endowed his simple, straightforward nature with all manner of psychological complications, and worshipped him accordingly. Furthermore and beyond all else, though scarcely admitted even to herself, she had stored up in some remote convolution of her brain the words of Brooke Lord, spoken as they had left the terrace, that moonlight night in June. Brooke Lord was not a man to be enthusiastic; but even he had phrased the belief that Amédée Leleu was a man worth watching.

Since that October afternoon when Patience had inadvertently brought into prominence Leleu's politics, and so betrayed Arline into a plain definition of her own social tenets, Sir Morris had made an abrupt about-face turn. For full twenty hours, Arline Lord had seemed to him a revelation. In the twenty-first hour, she actually became to him a revelation, and the second revelation was by no means pleasing. From that time onward, he delighted in Arline as in a beautiful picture, feared her not a little and adored her not at all. Not even Jimmy, accustomed as he was to the outbursts of Arline, could have imagined the swift revulsion of feeling which Sir Morris was destined to experience, that day. Afterwards, he realized its effect; but he attributed it less to a disappointment in Arline than to a tardy discovery that Patience Tyler was a girl of uncommon poise and charm. Moreover, strange to say, the discovery in Jimmy's eyes added ten-fold to the social value of Sir Morris Plante. After all, Jimmy was observing to himself by the first weeks in January, Sir Morris was not altogether the duffer he had given promise to be.

Sir Morris, meanwhile, was enjoying life to the full, that winter. People liked him. It was impossible to do other-

wise, when one looked into his clean blue eyes and listened to his deep, rumbling laugh. Sir Morris might not be a genius ; but he was very much a man, and society welcomed him accordingly. As a matter of theory, Sir Morris was studying certain phases of the Canadian trade relations ; as a matter of fact, he danced and dined and went in for the sport of the hour, whether the sport accomplished itself by means of a bag of golf clubs or by a pair of tawny moccasins and of scarlet-fringed snowshoes.

“What if I do come a cropper now and then?” Sir Morris observed philosophically, the first time he was hauled out of a drift in the lee of the wall of the jail. “It’s the custom of the country I’m after ; and, by Jove, I’ll have it in time.” And, upright once more, he went floundering away upon the fleet heels of Patience Tyler, who had the superhuman tact to avoid both mockery and pity in the welcome she accorded him.

And Jimmy, by her other side, also forbore to utter derisive comment, although the spectacle of Sir Morris, prostrate and with his legs agitating themselves in futile circles, had been a source of spiritual refreshment to Sir Morris’s quondam fag.

And so the careless, merry, bracing days were speeding by, and midwinter was upon the land.

Then came one brilliant Sunday afternoon, when the snow-locked city lay a-dazzle in a sunlight that wrapped its stern gray walls in a rosy haze and capped each church and convent with a blazing cross of flame. All the world was out-doors, that afternoon, and Arline, as she came down the steps and turned up the Grande Allée, found herself one of a long procession which stretched straight from the Château wall past the toll gate, past Spencer Wood and on to Sillery Church, mounted sentinel-wise to look down upon the river flowing beneath its walls.

Arline was alone. No ordinary pressure could induce

Mrs. Brooke Lord to forego her midday nap. Jimmy and Sir Morris in a vast sleigh, plume-decked and heaped with rugs, had driven off in the direction of the Cape, and Brooke Lord admitted to a constitutional prejudice against physical exercise in any form, so Arline set out alone.

Leleu overtook her outside the toll gate. It occurred to him, in thinking it over afterwards, that he met her upon the selfsame spot where, seven months before, he had first fallen into step at her side. For the time being, however, he was far too much in earnest to think of such slight details. His mind was fixed upon one question, and that question concerned itself solely with the future of Arline and of himself.

The girl glanced over her shoulder, as Leleu's voice sounded in her ears. She started slightly and smiled a welcome ; and it seemed a matter of course to them both that Leleu should fall into step beside her. The ease with which he did so betokened his frequent habit. But, as was by no means habitual between them, their eyes dropped apart, and then silence fell.

Arline broke the silence resolutely. Leleu's eyes were glowing ; his lips, pressed close together, showed no trace of his usual smile ; his hands, buried from sight in the pockets of his fur-lined coat, were clinched into fists, and the thumbs were shut inside the fists. Arline's breath came short. She was too much a woman not to know what crisis was before her and, face to face with the crisis, she was surprised to find its corollaries assuming undue prominence. They even gave her a swift dislike of the brown Franciscan friar who went plodding past them, his girdle of knotted cords beating softly against his side with every step of his bare red feet. For the moment, it seemed to her not only that Leleu himself stood for that and for infinitely more besides, but that he was mutely

asking for her to stand for it, too. She shivered slightly and quickened her pace, as she broke into voluble description of the *matinée* to which she had gone with Patience, only the day before.

Quietly and without interruption, Leleu heard her to the end. The end was slow in coming. It lasted to the cemetery gate, and back almost to the Belvedere; but Leleu made no attempt to hasten it. Instead, he allowed it to drop into a silence so profound that Arline found herself paralyzed and unable to break its throbbing hush. Then, at length, Leléu spoke, simply, as was his wont.

"Miss Lord," he said, while, deep in his pockets, the knots of his fists grew tighter; "it is well that I have met you here. I have much to say, much to ask. I—perhaps I can do it better in the open air and with you alone. Is it that you are willing to listen and hear me?"

Arline hesitated, caught her breath, looked at him imploringly. The crisis had come. She had known it was coming, had braced herself to meet it, only to find that she was no more ready to meet it than she had been, months before. It involved much, she knew. Vaguely she felt that it would involve still more, that upon the known corollaries hung yet other corollaries of which as yet she did not dream. She held herself steady, unyielding; but she allowed herself to meet the eyes of Leleu, and instantly there flashed into her own eyes a tenderness such as they rarely knew. Again she steadied herself; but, without her willing it, already the crisis was past. In her ears was the echo of her own voice, saying quietly, —

"Yes, I am willing."

And with her permission Leleu spoke, quietly no longer, but, now that constraint was ended, with a fiery passion which betrayed his strain of Gascon blood. And Arline, listening, strove in vain to stem the tide of his

pleading, strove, too, to quiet the beating of her own wilful, turbulent heart.

At last Leleu straightened his shoulders, swept backward his hands in a sudden wave of self-assertion, and turned again to face her.

"I know what you would say, what you think," he said rapidly. "You are English and Protestant; I am Catholic and French. We are of two races, two creeds. The difference is there. It is idle to deny. What matter? In spite of creed, in spite of blood, our hearts are alike; each goes to seek the other. The rest is easy. What matters creed or blood to those who love each other?"

And once more Arline caught her breath; but she suffered the question to fall, unanswered, across the silence.

It was not until they were passing the Franciscan convent that Leleu spoke again. Above their heads, the bell was sending down its mellow call to prayer, and his voice seemed to have caught and held something of its deep-toned quiet.

"It is the hour of Benediction," he said briefly. "Will you, too, come inside the chapel?"

Arline's sharp intake of the breath showed her relief. Her silence had been of baffled argument, not of consent. The interval spent in the chapel would give her time to collect anew her forces. It would be hard to lose Leleu as a lover; it would be wellnigh impossible to accept him as a husband. If only he had been a Protestant, or even an avowed agnostic like St. Just! And yet, as he had said, what matter? She followed him up the aisle and into a pew where, kneeling, she bowed her head until the soft fur of her muff had shut out sight and sound, and forced her back upon the fight that raged within her.

It was long before she was able to take any account of the thoughts which rushed through and through her brain

so swiftly that, as one apart from herself, she longed to thrust a stick among the jarring wheels of her consciousness and force them out of their relentless whirring. Then, of a sudden, she opened her eyes and sat erect. The whirring was ended; the spiritual dizziness had gone. She merely sat there, quiet, waiting, still as one apart from herself, to see what would happen next. And, by her side, Leleu still knelt, motionless save for the quivering of the slim, dark hands that hid his face from Arline's sight.

Up in the gallery above her head, the organ was sobbing softly. Through the low door at the left of the chancel, the white-robed nuns came gliding in, two by two, two by two, their heads bent and their hands clasped beneath their filmy veils. For one short instant, they paused to kneel and kiss the floor before the altar where knelt the two still figures in perpetual adoration; then they flitted away to their seats in the dim chancel, and more came after them, and yet more.

The sermon, preached by chance by the same burly friar she had met outside, fell upon unheeding ears. Mechanically, Arline was taking account of all the artistic detail of the place: of the tall white pillars lightened here and there with slender columns of pink and green, of the deep red hangings, of the tiny dots of light tipping the candles clustered at the shrines, of the yellow globes of the altar lamps, of the kind, grave face of Saint Anthony, cuddling the Baby Jesus on his arm, and of the brown-frocked friar whose face and robes stood out in rugged austerity from among the dainty little nuns who filled the chancel. And all these were the corollaries.

Abruptly she returned to conscious thought. The sermon was ended. The preacher had left the chancel only to return, his coarse brown frock exchanged for glistening white robes, stiff with threads of gold and silver. Reverently he drew near the altar, bowing in prayerful

homage before its shadowy whiteness. Then of a sudden the high white chapel was flooded with a blaze of light, glaring down from the arches above, glowing out through the translucent altar until the whole place was gleaming like the heart of a gigantic opal. And, meanwhile, down from behind the low white screen before the organ there floated the thin, sweet voices of the nuns, —

*Oh, Salutaris Hostia,
Quae coeli pandis ostium.*

The silence dropped again, and Arline felt her breath come short.

It came shorter yet and shorter, as the priest slowly mounted the steps before the altar, lifted the sacred monstrance and held it above the kneeling congregation. Only the solemn note of the bell and the faint clashing of the chains of the censer broke a stillness which, to Arline, seemed to have been ordained aforetime for the mere sake of letting her count the throbbings of her heart. Then, in the stillness, she felt Leleu's fingers close about her hand, as it lay on the rail before her. For an instant, her own fingers lay rigid in his clasp. Then they relaxed, and yielded to the pressure.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“OH, the devil!” Jimmy observed to his razor, next morning. “It’s all set up, ready to go to press, as soon as they can get a dispensation from the Pope. Dispensation! Arline! As if the fellow did her a favour to marry her, and had to get permission for it! Man proposes, and then the Pope dispenses; and she’ll be married in the back kitchen of the Basilica by a priest in a black smock frock without any white lace overskirt. Oh, damn!” And he cast aside his razor and sought cold water and a towel.

It had been late, the night before, when Arline had left her room and come down to the library where the Brooke Lords and Jimmy sat talking before the fire. Brief as was her announcement that she had promised to marry Amédée Leleu, nevertheless it had aroused a storm of opposition. Contrary to her custom, however, Arline passed through the storm without sharing in its fury. Cold and pale and very quiet, she waited for its ceasing. Then she merely reiterated her determination, rose and went away again up the stairs and into her own room. The fire of her emotion seemed to have burnt itself out to ashes, and the ashes had whitened past the possibility of being stirred once more to a glow. The struggle had come earlier, out on the Grande Allée, in the Franciscan chapel, on the twilight walk towards home when Leleu’s fervent words had branded themselves on her mind and seemed to seal her once and forever as his own. She had yielded herself wholly to the fire of his love; like a tired

child, she was glad to turn away from the struggle and its corollaries, and rest in the strength of his devotion, secure in his loyalty and happy in his happiness. And then, just as they were parting at the door, he had spoken other words, strange words to Arline, and fraught with sinister suggestion. *Dispensation* had been one of them, and it had sent Arline away to her room, to begin her struggle all anew.

The outcome of it was inevitable, however. The past was over; it had left her weary and apathetic. The present was intoxicating, and, under its spell, the future grew dim before her eyes. The dispensation was a mere detail of form. It was enough that Leleu was Leleu, and loved her, and that the whole gentler side of her nature triumphed in the possession of his love. She bathed her eyes, rearranged her disordered hair and went down to the library to brave the inevitable storm.

"It's not Leleu himself that I mind," Jimmy said to Patience, the next afternoon. "He's a good fellow and a gentleman. I'm not too sure he's not fully good enough for Arline. Molly makes a row because he's French. It's not quite that with me, either. Of course, I like the English better; but I strongly suspect that Leleu's family tree is black oak, when mine is nothing but scrub."

Patience nodded.

"I've always liked Mr. Leleu," she said.

Jimmy laughed shortly.

"A long way better than you have Arline," he suggested.

"N—no." Patience fibbed bravely, for she saw the trouble in Jimmy's eyes, and she knew that it was by no means the first time the trouble had come there by reason of Arline. "I do like your sister; it is only that I am not like her."

Again Jimmy laughed shortly.

"Thank heaven for that!" he interrupted and, for the first time in their acquaintance, Patience heard a ring of real bitterness in his honest voice.

"But, after all," Patience queried, after a pause; "what is your objection to Mr. Lelen?"

"His religion," Jimmy made answer, with morose brevity.

"But why?" Patience asked him. "Of course, he is a Catholic; but he is so honest and sincere about it all. What difference does it really make?"

But Jimmy answered with a question.

"Miss Tyler, have you ever lived much in a Catholic country?"

She shook her head.

"No; only here. But I can see that it makes all the difference in the world; you have so many here."

"Yes," Jimmy echoed gravely; "it does make all the difference in the world. We, who are born facing it, know the difference, too, for what it's worth."

Patience drew her warm finger-tip across the frosted window pane, then watched the frosty crystals creep up and cover the gash.

"It amounts to — that!" she said then.

But Jimmy tore his time card straight across.

"No," he said; "it amounts to this, when it comes into the life of a Protestant woman. She remains a Protestant; but she is wedded by the Catholic church and welded into it. She is torn across and across, and taken away from the roots of her old life and grafted upon a new. Sometimes she takes root there and grows and blossoms. Sometimes she just withers and dries away, and then it is an end of everything. Are you ready? Come." And he rose to his feet.

The vivid sunshine of the day before had been followed by gray, cold clouds. The city walls, in the dun-coloured

light, were dark and sinister and dreary. Out in the country, the snow-clad fields and the ice-locked river stretched away like polished sheets of steel, and, to the northward, the mountains rose in a dark blue line that heralded a coming storm. Rarely did the clutching hand of winter hold the place in a ruder grasp. For the hour, the physical cold was as nothing in comparison with the chill depression wrought by the forbidding, sunless sky.

Jimmy's mood, that day, matched the sky. Nevertheless, he had fulfilled his engagement to take Patience out to the Falls for an afternoon of sliding. There would be a certain relief in the physical exercise; there would be an even greater relief in the society of Patience, in talking things over with her and in viewing them with her sane and steady gaze.

The morning had been an endless one to Jimmy. For the first time in his life, he had found Molly in a fractious mood, when he had met her at the breakfast table. Arline had been heavy-eyed and listless, and Brooke had bolted his food and fled away to his office, eager to escape the surcharged atmosphere. Once and for all and explicitly he had said his say, the night before. Brooke Lord might be prosy and ponderous; but at least he lacked the vice of useless iteration.

While Jimmy and Arline yet lingered at the table, Mrs. Brooke Lord had excused herself on the plea of giving needful orders to her cook. Left to themselves, the brother and sister had faced an awkward pause. Then Jimmy had suddenly bent forward and laid his hand upon Arline's, as he said, with the tenderness only a large man can ever show, —

“Arline, old girl, you know I care no end about you and all that, that I'd give my ears for the sake of helping you on. I'm deuced sorry for you, sorry about it all; but —

I like Leleu, you know ; he's a good little fellow — but, after all, do you think it's quite worth while ? ”

He felt the answering clutch of Arline's cold fingers. Then she drew away from him and buried her face in her hands.

“ Oh, if I only knew ! ” she answered brokenly. “ It is all so tangled together, and I — Jimmy, it's no use. I love him, and I've given my word. ”

And with the pitiful, wailing note still sounding in his ears, Jimmy pushed back his chair, rose and laid one hand on her hair.

“ Arline, ” he said slowly ; “ this is no light matter. You know all that it implies. I want you to do the right thing and to be happy, want it for your sake and for the sake of the dear old pater. But, back of it all, the matter rests between Leleu and you. If you love him the way you should, the way he deserves to be loved, the rest won't make any difference. If you don't, and are going into this thing with your eyes wide open, then heaven help you ! Once for all, make up your mind just where you stand. Then, wherever it is, so long as you're honest, I'll stand beside you. ”

The hush was broken only by Arline's long, sobbing breaths. Then even that sound ceased and all was quiet. Jimmy waited a little longer, his hand still resting on her hair. At length he turned away and shut the door behind him.

Those of Jimmy's friends who met him abroad, that morning, wondered at his absorption in himself, at the absence of his usual jovial smile. At nightfall, when his poise had been somewhat restored by his long afternoon with Patience in the open air, he smiled grimly to himself as he recalled the many miles of pavement he had covered in his restless, aimless wandering. Towards noon, crossing from Fabrique Street to Buade, he yielded to some sudden

impulse and, entering the Basilica, he sat down in one of the middle pews and gave himself over to wondering how it would feel to be an integral part of the congregation who gathered there to share its pompous ritual. In the dull winter midday, the arches draped themselves in sombre shadow, and the chancel, lighted only by the undying lamp of the inner sanctuary, was wrapped in a gloom as heavy as that which wrapped his mood. Dimly through the gloom, he could make out the figure of a priest moving to and fro before the high altar. Once the clatter of a falling book echoed across the silence. Then the silence dropped heavily over the heavy gloom, and Jimmy rose and hastily sought the door. The silence and the gloom and the sweet, faint odour of incense stifled him and made him afraid.

And his father, dying, had called Jimmy to the side of his bed and bidden him be brave and take good care of little Arline. His steps rang sharply upon the icy pavement, as he rounded the corner by the post office and came out upon the terrace.

From the window of his room where he sat reading his home letters, Sir Morris spied Jimmy, leaning on the rail, his shoulders shrugged together and his chin on his fists. Bending forward, Sir Morris watched him intently for a moment. Every line of Jimmy's figure told of trouble and dejection. Sir Morris laid down his letters, cast a regretful glance about his warm, luxurious room, gave a quick little shiver as he looked out at the dun gray sky and then rose and picked up his fur-lined coat. A moment later, his cheery voice broke in on Jimmy's reverie.

"What's the row, old man?" he demanded.

Jimmy never raised his eyes from the river.

"Oh, it's you," he said ungraciously.

Notwithstanding his pity, a twinkle came into the depths of Sir Morris's blue eyes. Not so, as a rule, were people wont to receive his friendly sympathy.

"Yes, it's I. But what's the row?" he repeated.

Still Jimmy's heavy eyes rested upon the swift, dark river, upon the shifting, grinding cakes of ice.

"Row enough," he blurted out desperately. "Arline has announced her engagement to Leleu."

"Oh! The! Devil!" Sir Morris spoke in three detached sentences.

"Exactly so." Jimmy's answer was curt; but his tone showed that he gained a certain comfort out of his friend's consternation.

"But the fellow is a Catholic!" Sir Morris exploded.

"Yes."

"And, next thing, they'll go and have some Catholic children!" Sir Morris announced, in a second explosion.

Jimmy turned up his sable collar about his ears.

"You've hit it to a T," he said. "Come. Shall we walk up the terrace?"

The wind, sweeping down the river, cut their faces sharply; but both men were too absorbed in their subject to heed its impact. Sir Morris was the next to speak.

"What has come over the girl?" he asked.

Jimmy's laugh grated, even on his own ears.

"Leleu has." Then he relented. "No; that's not fair," he added. "I like Leleu. He's an all-round good fellow. He can't help his Catholicism; it's congenital and hereditary and all the rest of it. For all practical purposes, it does n't matter in the least. But when it comes to having your sister marry him —"

Sir Morris broke in upon the pause into which Jimmy had projected his sentence.

"But I never thought she was particularly keen about him," he said slowly.

"That's the worst of Arline," Jimmy answered. "You can never tell. She is a bundle of nerves and a snarl of emotions, and she never stops to straighten out the snarl."

She may love Leleu to distraction ; she may be going into it just because — ” He pulled himself together sharply. “ I beg your pardon, old man. I’ve no business to be talking over my sister with you. I suspect this thing has gone on my nerves more than you ’d think it might.”

Sir Morris nodded in kindly comprehension. He waited until Jimmy had swallowed once or twice. Then he took out a leather case.

“ Smoke ? ” he asked laconically.

“ Thanks,” Jimmy replied quite as laconically.

And they tramped on again without speaking.

When Jimmy broke the silence, his tone was quieter, his accent had lost somewhat of its nervous haste.

“ Leleu will make her a good husband,” he said then. “ I’ve not the least doubt of that. He is a gentleman and, what counts for more than that in managing Arline, he’s steady and patient. From what I’ve been hearing — I’ve been hearing things at the club, you see — in character the fellow is a veritable Galahad. If a French fellow gets that reputation at an English club, you can depend upon it that there’s something back of the reputation. As a race, here in Quebec, we are n’t prone to endow our Gallic friends with any imaginary virtues. It’s much more likely to be the other thing we give them.”

“ And, after all,” Sir Morris suggested, with a palpable attempt at consolation ; “ the fellow’s Catholicism may not count.”

But Jimmy demurred.

“ It’s meat and drink and the breath of life to him, old man. What’s more, I can’t help a sneaking sort of admiration for the way he takes it. He never obtrudes it, never takes it out and shoves it under our eyes ; but he never fails, somehow or other, to make us feel that it’s there. He’s Catholic French to the core of his soul, and it’s a mighty good soul, too. I wish mine were as good.

But Arline is English, and her religion, as far as she has any, is Protestant. Just now she thinks it does n't matter ; but she's bound to find out that it does."

"But suppose she really loves the chap?" Sir Morris queried.

"Then she can be baptized into the church, to-morrow, for all I care. I don't care what she does, so long as she is in earnest and ready to stick to her position when it gets under fire. And yet," Jimmy relapsed into gloom again ; "the fire is bound to be heavy. Her set won't take him up, not past the outer layers ; she'll have to be taken into his. She will go to French functions, and shout with the Liberals and, in the fulness of time, she'll be the mother of a family of youngsters who jabber French at breakfast and keep a pink china dish of holy water nailed to the wall above their beds. It's all right ; it's inevitable ; but it's bound to make some mighty inconvenient complications now and then."

Sir Morris tossed away the end of his cigar.

"When are they going to be married?" he asked.

"Nobody seems to know. There'll have to be some sort of a dispensation, you see."

Sir Morris's blue eyes widened to show their encircling whites.

"Dispensation !" he echoed.

"Yes, dispensation," Jimmy iterated, with a grim satisfaction in the word. "A Catholic can't marry a Protestant, without. The Pope does them, and sends over a batch to every diocese. As fast as people demand them, they're given out. Sometimes the demand gets ahead of the supply, and the marriage must wait till some more dispensations can be sent out from Rome. Leleu will probably get right about it. Meanwhile, there are the settlements : the dowry, you know, and the agreement about the children. That's the worst of the whole. At this point of

proceedings, it seems safe enough to promise that they shall be brought up Catholic. When they appear and begin to know things, it's another story. Fancy me, you know, going out to one of the convents to hear my future neevy be quizzed in his catechism! I don't mean to be a bigot, old man; but, hang it! Catholicism isn't the only thing that's congenital, not by a long ways."

That night, Jimmy dined at the Garrison Club. The domestic atmosphere was still overcast, and he had angled in vain for a bidding to dine with Patience and her brother. Failing that, he telephoned to Sir Morris to meet him at the club and, later, to go with him to the theatre. Underneath the remainder of his motives lay one, strong, but yet only half formulated. Just once more, he had a longing to be in the old place and on the old terms. As soon as the news of Arline's engagement should spread abroad, Jimmy was well aware he would be doomed to walk, a marked man and the cynosure of curious eyes that watched him askance in order to see how he took it.

As he left the low stone building and came out into Louis Street, the snow was falling softly. Jimmy fastened his coat, shivered a little and glanced regretfully back at the scarlet warmth of the curtains which opened here and there, to give tempting vistas of the brilliant room within. Then suddenly he straightened his shoulders, and his head lifted itself proudly.

"Good evening, Lord!" St. Just was saying, as he halted in Jimmy's pathway. "I hope I may not be too early in sending my good wishes to your sister; but I have just been talking with Leleu. Permit me," his voice took on an edge as of keenest steel; "permit me to congratulate you upon your future brother-in-law who, as you know, is a most good Catholic."

And Jimmy braced himself until, by sheer force of

indomitable will, his voice rang out in its wonted hearty tone,—

“Hang the Catholicism, St. Just! It’s Leleu himself that we count.”

Then, with his hand shut tight on the sleeve of Sir Morris, he turned and crossed to the Esplanade.

CHAPTER NINE

“**C**HANGE the name and not the letter,” Patience observed sententiously.

Stanwood helped himself to more bacon. The Tylers gave themselves the luxury of having their landlady serve their breakfast in their own apartment. From her childhood, Patience had always stoutly maintained that the beginning of the day should be kept free from invasion. The early hours were the hours of family life.

Stanwood glanced up from his bacon.

“You get a double dose, this time,” he suggested.

“Two negatives make one affirmative.”

“Generally ; not always. But this is a positive statement and doubles its force.”

Stanwood laughed.

“But just think how it simplifies the problem of deciding how to mark the silver !” he reminded her. “A plain *A. L.* will do for any emergency, even —” he glanced up again, his grave eyes lighting with whimsical fun ; “even in case of a second marriage.”

“Stanwood !”

“Well, why not ?” he queried placidly. “You know we neither one of us regard this as a satisfactory solution of the problem. In school, when my problems would n’t come, I rubbed them out and started fresh.”

“Washed them out with your tears ?” Patience inquired.

“No ; with a rub of my fist. Time may come when I shall advise Leleu to try the same method.”

"You're not fair to Arline," Patience said in dutiful rebuke; but her voice, as she spoke, lacked all conviction.

With grave eyes, Stanwood stared down at the bit of bacon which he was absent-mindedly stabbing with his fork.

"Yes, I am fair to her," he said slowly. "I don't like her, Pat; but that's a part of the fairness. They're both of them taking tremendous risks in going into this thing. The chances break about even on her being unhappy in the end; but it's ten to one that she completely wrecks his life."

Patience pushed aside her plate and sat looking at the tablecloth with eyes which reflected somewhat of her brother's gravity.

"If only something would break it off!" she sighed.

Stanwood shook his head.

"It's too late for that, Pat. They've broken their bread, and now they must eat it. It's bound to be bitter now and then; it remains to be seen whether or not it will be poisonous. What time does the wedding come off?"

"At nine o'clock."

Stanwood rose from his seat.

"Heathenish hour!" he observed. "What's the use?"

"Local custom. Deference to the mass which they can't have." Patience drummed on the table, and clattered the coffee things noisily. Then impetuously she sprang to her feet. "Oh, Stanwood, it's horrible! All her life long, the poor girl has been used to a chief seat in the Cathedral, and now she is n't worthy to have a wedding in the Basilica."

"Saves no end of fuss, though," Stanwood commented practically. "For the rest, she should have thought of it before."

"She did n't know."

"Even the sin of ignorance gets punished, Patsy," Stanwood replied laconically.

"But how could she know it?" Patience urged.

"Living here, how could she help it?"

"I suppose it never occurred to her to ask."

"How did she find out?"

"Mr. Leleu told her."

Stanwood whistled.

"Poor Leleu!" he said.

"Yes, it must have been hard," Patience assented. "We women don't like to give up what you call the fuss: the wedding march and the lights and the palms. It must have been hard for Mr. Leleu to have to tell her that she must lose it all."

Stanwood took up his hat.

"I wonder if he also told her what he was losing," he said. "Knowing Leleu, I doubt it."

"What is he losing?" Patience demanded hotly. "The man never cares about those things."

Stanwood was already in the doorway. He paused, with his hand upon the knob.

"No," he answered; "not for those things; but for others. To a man like Leleu, it's no light thing to feel himself under the ban of his church, to know that his marriage is a direct violation of its law. For my part, even if I am no Catholic, I should hate it to have my wife classed as a Prohibitory Impediment."

"But if he loves her?" Patience argued weakly.

"Leleu also loves his church, Pat. For Arline's sake, he is giving up a good deal more than the *Lohengrin* march and a whole dress parade of palms; and, instead of bewailing her loss, it would be a bit decent for her to remember his."

Arline, however, had given no thought to that phase of the situation.

If avoidable ignorance be sin, then Arline had sinned grievously. Born and educated in a city where eleven twelfths of the population were Catholic and where mixed marriages were frequent, it had never once occurred to the girl to inform herself regarding the conditions of such a marriage. She had a vague idea that certain especial arrangements were necessary; she had no idea at all in regard to the nature of such arrangements. Even after she had drifted little by little into a species of intimacy with Leleu, even after she realized that that intimacy could have but the one inevitable end, she had yet taken no steps towards her own enlightenment. It had remained for Leleu, then, to enlighten her.

Gently and with infinite tact, he had approached the matter, upon the eve of the signing of the marriage settlements. Arline had given but a careless attention to his words. Then she had brushed them aside entirely.

"Yes, yes ; but don't look so worried, Amédée. Brooke will see to all that. But how did you get this horrid cold? You are hoarse as a crow. I wish you could learn to be careful. I am half tempted not to marry such a reckless boy."

In answer to her tone, a smile chased the anxiety from his dark eyes.

"It is worth while to have a cold, for the sake of having your pity," he declared.

But Arline flushed. Then she frowned.

"Of course I pity you," she said ; "but I blame you more. There's the Laurie reception, to-morrow night, and just think what a spectacle you'll be, with your nose all pink and your eyes like saucers!" Then, as she saw Leleu's dark cheeks redden, she added, with the gentler note that came into her voice at times, "You poor old boy, you ought to be in bed. Come and sit by the library fire and talk to me. What if you did have an

engagement? You are mine, you know; and I forbid your going out into this storm."

And Leleu, as he listened to the cadence of her voice, wholly caressing and womanly and winning, cast to one side the doubts which had assailed him, whenever he had thought of the settlements to be signed upon the morrow.

The doubts came back to him, however, while he watched the growing frown on Arline's face, as she listened to the voice of the lawyer reading out the formal clauses of the marriage settlement. The most of it she heard in scowling silence: the rights of her dower, the solemn pledge that in no way should she oppose Leleu in the full exercise of all the forms of his religion. Her eyes blazed with a sombre fire and she shut her teeth, while her mind rushed swiftly to and fro over the Catholic ritual in so far as she knew its laws; but, in the end, she gave a frigid assent. Then the fire leaped up again at the second clause.

"The children, Amédée? All the children?" she demanded, and her flaming cheeks were not alone from the modesty of maidenhood.

"It is the law," he told her.

"But only the sons. Not all?"

"Yes."

She turned upon him fiercely.

"I'll not consent. It is not right, nor just, nor honourable. You never told me, never warned me."

Leleu's face went white.

"I tried to tell you."

"When?"

"Again and again. Last night."

Regardless of the cold, curious eyes of the lawyer, of the obvious annoyance of Brooke Lord, she made a hasty step forward and laid an imperious hand over the papers spread out upon the table.

"I will never consent in the world," she burst out. "It is unfair and fraudulent. I should have been told."

"But I did tell you, Arline," Leleu urged gently.

"You did not. At least, I did not understand."

"I tried my best."

"You should have insisted. You have no right to force me, unprepared, to assent to things like this." Then her tone softened. "Think of it, Amédée! You ask me to give it all, to give it for your sake. You are resigning nothing. I am called to sign away my children into religious slavery. There should be some division, some opportunity for choice."

But again Leleu said, steadily, albeit with shaking lips, —

"It is the law of the church, Arline."

"Whose church?" she demanded fiercely.

Even in the light of her angry eyes, Leleu dropped his head devoutly, and he spoke with the simplicity of a child.

"Of mine," he answered. "Of the Catholic Church of Christ."

A hush followed his brief words. Then Arline walked across to the window and stood looking out into the street.

"Well, if I must," she said, with harsh impatience. "Very well. I agree to the condition."

But Leleu, as he went away to his room, looked wan, as a man stricken with mortal disease.

The mood passed off, however, and, on her side, Arline sought to make amends by her increased gentleness for the wounds she had been reckless in inflicting. The scars were there; it was impossible for her not to see their mark. Seeing, she spoke no word of regret; but she poured out upon them the balm of tender, pitying care.

Twice more, however, there had been a similar stormy scene. The second had been the natural result of the

first. Arline, angered to learn that she could not be married beneath the tattered flags in the old Cathedral chancel, had suggested that, by way of excluding society from a conspicuously simple wedding, they be married in Lent and offer the holy season and Molly's recent mourning as excuse for their avoidance of the sumptuous wedding of which she had always dreamed. To her angry surprise, Jimmy had come to the support of Leleu in his refusal to be married in Lent. Her angry surprise, however, had been as nothing in comparison with the storm of emotion which shook her, when she found that the ceremony could not even be held in the Basilica, but must be relegated, bannless, prayerless, massless, to the chill simplicity of the sacristy in the rear.

That night, Leleu walked his room and tried not to think of the future, nor yet of Arline. The gray dawn found him still on his feet, haggard, but quiet, while he sought to plan some fashion in which he could piece together the fragments of his shattered life. Arline, gentle and rather pale, took her breakfast in leisurely calm, before she went to the telephone. Ten minutes later, Leleu was on the steps, his lips unsteady, but his eyes alight.

And so, between happiness and gloom, between sun and storm, the weeks had come and gone, and June was in the land.

Arline had chosen the day for their wedding, and she had chosen it upon the rounded year since the night when the evening gun had boomed its solemn call across Leleu's introduction to her who was now to become his wife. In the early morning of their wedding day, Leleu came up the steps and rang the bell. Early as it was, Arline was fully dressed, and she met him in the hall. Accustomed though he was to her radiant beauty, Leleu, as he looked upon her, yet bit his lip to conceal its quiv-

ering pride. Regardless of Molly's strictures concerning the proper dress for so quiet a ceremony, Arline's imperious will had carried the day. It was enough to lose the wedding march and the throng of guests; she would not be deprived of the wedding gown as well. And Leleu, as his dazzled eyes rested upon his bride-elect, felt that she had chosen wisely and with consummate skill. Dressed from neck to heel in shimmering lines of white, her head rose proudly and her eyes, from between her parted veil, glowed like two violets wet with the fresh morning dew. One hand caught back the floating folds of lace; the other clutched at a huge sheaf of greenish-white bride roses whose wide-open heads drooped heavily from their long green stalks.

Leleu drew one deep, full breath. Then, —

“Arline?” he said, and he held out his arms.

And, as she came softly forward to meet him, a single petal fell and lay on the floor at his feet.

Later, a little group gathered in the plain, oak-ceiled sacristy: Brooke Lord and his wife, Jimmy, the Tylers and Sir Morris Plante; and on the other side of the room, apart, yet of the company, stood the friends and kinsmen of Amédée Leleu. Then, while the hush was breathless, there came the venerable Père Leleu, his hands clasped reverently, his white head rising nobly from above his plain black soutane; and after him there came Amédée Leleu and Arline Lord. And, as they came slowly forward to the centre of the waiting group, a second petal detached itself and fell to the floor at their feet.

The sacristy was very still, and, across the stillness, the sonorous voice of the priest echoed with ten-fold solemn import, as he read the service, brief and bereft of all but the simplest, most needful words. And, after him, Leleu, grave and earnest, repeated his vow, —

"I, Amédée, take thee, Arline, for my lawful wife."

Then came the turn of Arline. Try as she would to hold herself steady, the words were wellnigh inaudible and, while she made her vow, the roses in her hands shook until a few more petals loosed themselves and dropped, one after one, upon the floor. Suddenly the girl lifted her eyes and stared straight, as though spellbound, into the face of the priest.

"By the authority committed to me," he was saying; "I pronounce you united in the bonds of matrimony."

Her head erect, she gave no heed to the petals that now were sifting down in a steady shower. Her face had lighted with the look for which Leleu had learned to long; and she received the ring with sweet humility. In the hush that followed, the Brooke Lords bowed their heads, and the friends of Leleu crossed themselves devoutly. Then, as Amédée Leleu and Arline Lord, man and wife for better for worse, turned to go out of the sacristy, they left behind them a mass of bruised white petals lying on the self-same spot where they had plighted their troth.

CHAPTER TEN

“**B**UT we don’t know anybody in that neighbourhood,” Arline said petulantly.

“Dr. Chacot is next door.”

Arline raised her brows.

“Who is he? I never heard of him.”

“He is one of the oldest friends of my father.”

She smiled a little insolently.

“Perhaps. Still, that does not signify that I know him.”

“Ah, but you will,” Leleu said eagerly. “He is a good man and intelligent, and his wife also.”

“His wife a good man?” Arline queried, for a perverse mood was upon her.

Leleu reddened. He was sensitive about his English, which was pure, but not colloquial. It was only in moments of excitement or anxiety, however, that he was betrayed into inaccuracies. Now he spoke with sudden dignity.

“I think you intend to misunderstand me, Arline. Madame Chacot — ”

Restlessly she had been tapping upon the window pane. Now she turned about abruptly to face him.

“No matter about your Madame Chacot, Amédée. She may be an angel of light, for all I care; but that is no reason I should be called upon to know her. As for burying ourselves down there, I’ll not consent to it, never.”

“But the house — ”

She interrupted him.

"If the house were a palace, I would n't live there. We should be buried there, buried, I tell you."

"You would make friends," he urged.

"I have all the friends now that I want," she answered tartly.

"One can never have too many."

She never raised her eyes from the street beneath her window; but her voice, cold and low-toned, came distinctly across the quiet room.

"It depends something upon the sort."

A white ring leaped into view about Leleu's lips.

"My God, Arline! Do you realize what you are saying?" he said sharply. Then he controlled himself and, crossing the room, rested his hand upon her shoulder with a gentle, caressing gesture which was infinitely pathetic. "Arline, we shall say things to regret, I fear," he said. "It is late, and we both are tired. Shall we leave the matter until the morning?"

As if in spite of herself, Arline yielded to the pressure of his hand and turned to face him. Meeting his eyes, her own eyes lost their angry gleam, and, far back in their blue depths, there came a little, wavering light of love. Then she said, with quiet decision, —

"No, Amédée. I think we'd best talk this thing out, before we try to sleep."

"But you are so tired, Arline: the journey, and the coming home to your brother's house, and all the rest. The house can wait. There is no hurry."

"Yes," she assented. "The house can wait. Our understanding about it can not."

With a little weary gesture, he let his hand fall back to his side. Then he drew forward a chair to the blazing hearth.

"As you will; only sit down by the fire," he said slowly.

"You will gain nothing to weary yourself, and the talk may be long. Now," he added, as Arline dropped into the chair and stretched out her slippered feet to the blaze; "what is it, Arline, that you so dislike?"

Rather imperiously she waved him to a seat at the opposite end of the rug. She was strategist enough to know that a woman, seated, is at a disadvantage in an argument with a man on his legs; she was woman enough to be certain that she was at a disadvantage with her will, whenever she came within reach of Leleu's quieting, caressing touch. When he too was seated, —

"I dislike the house and the location," she said, with steady, steely decision.

"But why?"

"It is too far from all my friends."

He smiled, and the smile was warm with loving pride.

"But you so easily make new ones."

This time, she chose her words with care.

"Perhaps. Perhaps not so easily as you think, Amédée. But, in any case, the old friends are the best."

"Surely. And these are my old friends," he urged.

"It is my dream to have you know them, Arline."

"I have more friends now than I can keep up with," she demurred.

"And to have them know you," he added.

The words were quite devoid of flattery; they were only the simple statement of his attitude towards her. Again into the depths of her eyes there flashed the gentler light; but she only answered carelessly, —

"But I dare say they would not get on with me at all. I think, all things considered, it is best for me to keep to the old set that I have known ever since I was born. It is home to me, you know. This other would be like a foreign city."

"But home to me," he reminded her.

"Yes; but, after all, it's not quite the same for a man. He has his profession, his club. His social life is n't everything to him. He shares it with his wife, and meets her friends there. His other friends, the friends she does n't know, he can see in his office, can meet at his club. He —"

"But I want you to know my friends, Arline," Leleu interposed.

"Yes, in a way," she assented absently; "but still, there's not much use. They are absorbed in things I don't know anything about, about which I care even less."

Again he reddened.

"And yet they are the very things that go to make up my life," he answered.

Her tone was still careless.

"Yours, yes; but not mine."

He faced her in surprise.

"Surely they are one."

She laughed lightly.

"Amédée, you sentimental boy! But, now that our honeymoon is over, we must face the fact that we each of us have our individual interests."

"That we share with each other," he added.

She laughed again.

"Time will tell. Some of them, of course, we shall put together into a common fund. Some will have to remain apart. I don't expect you to help choose my frocks, any more than you expect me to take a hand in your politics."

Leleu's face fell. In his young, loving optimism, he had expected exactly that.

"Then," he said slowly; "do I understand, Arline, that you do not care to know my friends?"

Not even her ears could be deaf to the lingering note of patient regret in his voice.

"Know them, yes; but I shall not be intimate with them, I suppose."

"But they would be so glad to have you," he persisted.

"One can never tell. But I am sure of my own friends."

"Then, if you are sure of them, why not come to live among mine? Yours will come there after you."

But Arline shook her head.

"You have your social alphabet yet to learn, Amédée," she admonished him a little patronizingly. "If I were to live among your friends, my friends would drop me utterly. They would suppose, quite naturally, that I had chosen to bury myself in the French set."

"But why not be in both?"

"Impossible," she answered, with a yawn. "One never could manage that. Instead, we will keep to the old way —"

"Mine, or yours?" he asked quietly.

"Mine, ours, the way we have known for the last year. Molly is omnipotent. She will see to it that our friends take you up. That is much better than for me to drop into your set, and it is bound to be one thing or the other."

He winced at her words; but her eyes once more were on the fire, and she went on quite placidly, —

"Of course, you have some friends, political ones, that you can't afford to lose. If their wives call on me, I shall do all I can to keep up my side of the acquaintance. That will involve some entertaining and all that. A part of it, though, you can do at your club. Still, I shall try to be nice to the women, when we meet." She yawned again. Then she rose and stood beside him. "There, Amédée, you see we have talked it all over and come to a perfect understanding. It's much better than as if we'd gone to bed, with our tempers all crisscross. And about the house, dear, let's let the matter drop, for the present. If we decide in a hurry, we shall be sure to make a mistake."

"And you would remain here?" he asked doubtfully.

She laughed across at his anxious eyes.

"Goodness, no! Molly would die of it. We never could get on together, even before I was married. Now it would be even worse. Besides, Jimmy is coming home, next week."

"But what of that?"

Not even Arline, careless as she was of his feelings, could bring herself to hint that she shrank from watching the daily contrast between Jimmy's big-bodied, jovial habits and his own more delicate reserve. Instead, she answered evasively, —

"Oh, Jimmy fills all space. We should be perpetually colliding with him."

"Then where would you go?" Leleu queried, while he stirred the ashes to a glowing heap, then stood staring at them with thoughtful eyes and lips that lacked their little smile. In his secret heart, he was telling himself that he was weak and foolish to have been so hurt by Arline's words; but the past half-hour had left him smarting in every fibre of his mind and nerve.

Arline crossed the room and, halting before the dressing table, unclasped the jewelled chain that hung about her throat. The jewels matched her eyes. Her long, plain gown, sweeping the carpet at her feet, reflected the creamy tones of her skin and brought into vivid contrast the piles of her pale brown hair. Under the fierce blaze of the electric globes above her head, her beauty defied all criticism; yet, for the moment, she was too intent upon gaining her point to heed even the masterful power of her own beauty.

With elaborate care, she fitted the chain into its leather case and shut the case with a snap. Then she turned to Leleu with a smile and laid her hand softly on his arm.

"We must make a compromise," she said. "I'll tell

you what we'll do. We will take an apartment at the Clarendon for the winter. Then we shall be on neutral ground, not in either set exactly, but within reach of them both."

Leleu smiled; but his accent was wishful.

"And not have a home of our own?" he asked.

"Yes, in all but the name of it," she assured him. "We shall have our own rooms, and can be as quiet, or as hospitable, as we choose. The only difference will be in the table, and there you will gain, for you know I have always told you I was wretchedly ignorant about a house. Really, it will be rather an ideal arrangement. Don't you think so?"

He forced himself to meet her smile, gay, caressing, winning.

"Yes," he assented; "only I had hoped —"

But she interrupted him in the midst of a phrase.

"We will do it, next year, if you like, Amédée. But now —"

In turn, he interrupted her, and his interruption was pitiful in its brief sincerity.

"But it was now that I wished a home, Arline. I would have you all for myself."

Her eyes drooped before the intense yearning of his eyes, of his whole face. For an instant, she bit her lip. Then she lifted her eyes once more.

"Thank you, Amédée," she said gently. "It is good to hear you say that. I wish I deserved it better. I—I'd like to be a good wife to you, if I only knew just how."

Reverently he laid his hand upon her cheek.

"We shall learn the lesson in time, Arline," he answered. "We both shall make mistakes; we both shall need to be patient. However, if we both are patient, the time will come when the mistakes will cease. That is the only possible ending to a love like ours." Then, still

more reverently, he gathered her into his arms and, drawing her head against his shoulder, pressed his lips upon her brows once and yet again.

Less than a week later and just on the eve of Jimmy Lord's return, the Leleus took up their abode at the Clarendon. Not even Leleu was able to cavil at their drawing-room, bright with its two wide windows and cosy with their own belongings. Upon one point of sentiment, Arline had been as adamant. None of the hotel furnishings should have place in the rooms where she was to spend her bridehood. Everything about them should be associated with the choice of herself and Leleu, or of the countless friends who had heaped their gifts upon them. The room was rich with quaint pottery, the floor soft with ancient rugs, and the walls filled with prints and tiny gems of colour. And, amid it all and more beautiful than all, Arline dominated the place and filled it with eager, throbbing life.

And Leleu, that first morning, as, his hands in his pockets, he paced to and fro between the windows, the one looking down through the leafless trees into the gray Cathedral close, the other facing northward towards the distant Laurentides, felt himself supremely content. After all and in spite of all his misgivings, this room was a fair semblance of home. His eyes had their old luminous sparkle, his lips their old happy curve, their old foreshadowing of a smile. Then the door opened and Arline came in, fresh and dainty and crisp as the frosty October morn outside the windows. Leleu heard her step, turned to face her and, in that instant, found out for true what he had only suspected before: that his contentment of a moment earlier had been but partial; that, henceforward, fulness of content for him could lie only in the presence of his wife, Arline.

It was less than a week later that St. Just came to call.

Leleu was still busy at the Parliament Buildings, and Arline received him alone. His dress was even more careful than of yore, his step more alert, his manner more gay and debonnair. And Arline met him cordially. It had been a dull day, and she had spent it for the most part alone. Under such conditions, any guest whatsoever would have been a pleasant diversion. Her welcome, though cordial, was wholly impersonal; but St. Just failed to recognize its impersonality.

"Your husband is back at his old post?" he asked, after they had gone over the usual preliminaries of greeting and inquiry.

"Yes, and very busy," Arline assented.

"The approaching elections, I suppose?" St. Just suggested.

"So he says. I can't see what he has to do with it, though. Monsieur Aucune is only a provincial minister."

St. Just laughed.

"The provincial ministers also have a work to do, my dear Madame Leleu."

Arline frowned. She felt no especial liking for her guest, and she was totally at a loss to see why he should preface her name with the adjective.

"I don't know what," she answered rather curtly.

St. Just laughed again. After the political knowledge he had found stowed away in the heads of certain pretty little French women of the city, he found Arline's statuesque indifference to her own ignorance vastly amusing.

"They are the ones whose duty it is to shift the lime-lights which follow the hero about the stage," he told her. "In your elections which are referred back to your common people, it is far less a question of what sort is your prime minister than of what sort of words your lesser politicians speak of him. Monsieur Aucune is a busy man just now. He speaks the addresses here and there in the

province, and it is the open secret that Leleu writes the addresses which he speaks."

Over the last words, he dropped his voice in a fashion which added ten-fold to their force. If he had expected Arline to manifest any pique at the tidings, however, he was doomed to disappointment. She lifted her eyes from the rug and spoke with complete indifference.

"How tiresome! Really, it sounds a bit unfair; but then, I know nothing at all about it."

St. Just leaned forward in his chair.

"Not now, perhaps; but Madame will learn."

"I scarcely think so." Arline's tone was even yet more indifferent.

St. Just laid two fingers of his right hand into the hollow of his left.

"You cannot be too sure," he said impressively. "Your position is a rare one."

Arline laughed idly.

"In what way, Monsieur St. Just?"

He edged still farther forward in his chair.

"For a salon. You have here all the ideal elements for it: a charming place of meeting, a yet more charming — but now, I shall not say it, unless you grant me the permission — and, attracted by both, you could have as your guests the coming men of both parties." He watched her narrowly, as he spoke. "Were you to wish it, within a short time these walls would be hearing the best of the political talk of the city."

Arline laughed again. Nevertheless, her eyes had brightened, and they rested no longer on the floor at her feet. They looked at St. Just; but they saw far into the future, and that future was rosy with ambitious dreams.

"But politicians do not talk in the presence of a woman, Monsieur St. Just," she reminded him.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"That is as may be. Not everywhere, perhaps; but here. Why not? The clubs are of one party. It is idle work to be ever whetting the knives for which you have no use. Here they would meet and cross their weapons."

"You choose to make a bloody picture," Arline said gayly.

Once more St. Just's shoulders rose, this time ever so slightly.

"Perhaps. But for sharp and direct thrusts, no weapons carry home so well as words, nor yet for secret thrusts in the dark. Best of all, words leave no outward trace. We may speak with cutting scorn of the policy of a friend, yet leave the surface of the friendship all unscarred."

Arline dropped her eyes to the floor.

"But who would come?" she asked, while she tried in vain to hold her voice to the old languid, indifferent key.

St. Just bowed with precise formality.

"Those to whom it pleased you to give an invitation."

"I am not so sure. I know so few who care for politics."

"Your husband will arrange all that," St. Just replied quietly. "Urge him to bring his friends. Grant me the same privilege. For your share, invite the elderly men who strut about the rooms of Mrs. Brooke Lord and bay the young Liberals as the fat old hound bays the fox, without seeking to rise for the chase. Then," St. Just knew the value of the suspensive pause. He suffered it to lengthen and then rose to his feet, before he added; "then there will be a salon such as the new world has never seen."

And, bowing, he left his hostess to ponder upon his words.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ARLINE'S face clouded, as she met Stanwood Tyler at the foot of the steps. At heart, she had no liking for the big, silent American who had so obviously held himself aloof from the charm of her personality. Nevertheless, he was her brother's own right arm, and she forced herself to smile, as he took his pipe from his teeth and stood aside to let her pass before him.

"Unless you were looking for Pat," he suggested. "I met her, just now, on her way to the terrace."

"Thank you. I was looking for her. Was she alone?"

"She was. There's no telling, though, how long it will last, unless you can prove an alibi for your brother."

"Or Sir Morris," she added lightly. "I had thought, this fall, that poor old Jimmy was out of the running."

Stanwood chuckled. He liked Jimmy Lord absolutely.

"If he is, he's only stopping to pull on his seven-league boots. But you will find Patience out there now."

"Then I will go after her. Perhaps she will come for a walk. It is a perfect day, and I — I need the exercise."

Stanwood glanced keenly into her flushed face and heavy eyes.

"I'd take it," he said kindly. "You're looking tired, to-day, Mrs. Leleu, tired and a bit worried. Go and play with Patience."

And Arline followed his bidding, hastily, because she was unwilling that he should see the water rushing to her eyes, at his curt, kindly words.

She overtook Patience at the southern end of the terrace and, to her infinite relief, the girl was quite alone. For the hour, Arline felt an imperative need of the self-reliant poise of Patience, of her brisk optimism.

"Yes," Patience said, as they turned about and faced down the terrace once more; "it is an ideal day, and I shall be glad to walk. Every one else is busy, and I really have nothing to do."

"How I envy you your freedom!" Arline said, and there was a dropping cadence to the words.

Patience laughed, and the laugh was not wholly sympathetic. At times, she liked Arline. Always she liked to walk. Nevertheless, on this brisk October day, when the whole world was glittering with yellow sunlight, it was a bit depressing to be forcibly annexed by a comrade in the dumps.

"There's not much to choose between us," she reminded Arline a little curtly. "We both of us are boarding, and we support the same sewing woman for the same number of hours a week."

Arline bit her lip.

"Yes," she answered. "But — there's Amédée."

"And there is also Stanwood," Patience added quietly.

"Yes," Arline answered again. "But there's the difference."

"I fail to see where," Patience replied rather hotly. "Of course, one is a husband, and the other a brother; but, after all, the conditions are very like."

"Except that your brother leaves you free as air."

Patience faced her, her brown eyes flashing.

"No more than your husband."

Arline's laugh was not good to hear.

"Free!" she echoed. "I am fettered at every turn."

Pausing by the rail, Patience looked at her companion from head to heel. Then she spoke with curving lips.

"Fettered? How?" she asked in quiet scorn.

Arline let go the curb she had placed upon herself.

"Fettered by prejudices older than the ages. Fettered by all the narrow tyranny of a race of tyrants. Fettered —"

But Patience interrupted.

"Arline, be still!" she said imperiously. Then she led the way from the end of the terrace, past the group of workmen levelling the new square in front of the post office and, crossing the street, came into the shadow of the Seminary wall. "Now," she added, as they entered the deserted stretch of road which runs along the Grand Battery and around the Ramparts; "if you can talk like a sane woman, Arline, please tell me what's the matter."

"Nothing is the matter," Arline made curt response.

"Then what are you wailing for?" Patience demanded a little too sharply for complete courtesy.

"I needed a little sympathy."

"But how can I sympathize, if nothing is wrong?" Patience demanded again. "I must say, Arline, you don't look as if you were summoning me to give my congratulations."

Swiftly Arline dropped her momentary hauteur.

"How cold you are!" she burst out. "Cold and unsympathetic! But how can I expect you to be anything else? You don't know what it is to have thrown away your freedom."

"No; I do not. Neither do I know," the hot blood rolled up across the girl's face. Then bravely she finished her phrase; "know what it is to have won the love of a loyal, high-minded man."

Arline swept her hands behind her, with her old, imperious gesture.

"Loyal? Yes, to all his old ways and traditions. High-minded? Yes; but infinitely narrow. He expects

me to give up everything, to yield at every point, to shape my life into the grooves his life has worn."

"Certainly," Patience assented fearlessly. "That is what you promised to do, when you married him."

"Promised! I was forced into the service against my will."

"But not into the marriage," Patience reminded her.

Arline faced her angrily.

"And so Jimmy has been talking me over," she sneered.

"Jimmy, as you call him, is too much a gentleman to be given to discussing his own family concerns," Patience replied imperturbably.

Arline reddened at the obvious rebuke.

"No matter now," she said shortly. "The marriage is made. We each of us have given a promise, and the promise was the same for us both. As long as that is true, I can't see why it should be my place to yield at every point, when Amédée goes his way, unyielding."

"But what have you had to yield, Arline?"

"Everything."

Patience laughed, as she glanced at the imperious figure at her side.

"I doubt it. But, for example, what?"

"My home. My friends. My social preferences."

"And Mr. Leleu?"

"He has tried to force his own upon me."

Patience raised her brows.

"Have you taken them?" she asked demurely.

"Don't be foolish, Patience. Of course not."

A mocking smile crept about Patience's scarlet lips.

"Then it strikes me that Mr. Leleu has given up fully as much as you have," she remarked.

"Yes, he has; but it is only because he has been obliged to. He has argued and argued; but of course I could not give up everything. It is wearing me out, day after day

the same old thing, neither of us advancing a step from the point where we started. It is as monotonous as that, and just about as progressive."

With a sudden sweep of her arm, she pointed upward to a latticed gallery high above the street, where a quartette of white-robed Carmelites paced back and forth, forth and back in a ceaseless, measured march which ended only with the coming of a new quartette to take their places. Turning her back to the parapet of the ancient wall, Patience stared up at them in sudden wonder. The bastion above Dambourges Hill was familiar ground to her. Again and again she had loitered there, gazing out across the Beauport flats, or down into the huddle of roofs at her feet; but never before had she noticed that latticed gallery, nor yet those white-robed, bearded figures whose ceaseless, measured tramp, barren substitute for virile exercise, seemed to her to have lasted from remote ages only to last into remoter ages yet to come. And always, as in some ancient dance, while one pair advanced, the other pair fell back. Play and counter play. In that one latticed gallery lay in epitome the life of the two-raced city, lay in epitome the life of Arline and Amédée Leleu. Patience caught her breath sharply, as she found herself wondering where the march would end.

Suddenly she turned about and faced Arline.

"Arline," she said directly; "you have been squabbling with your husband. What is it all about?"

The very directness of the question took Arline off her guard, and she answered no less directly.

"The Aucune reception, to-morrow night."

"What of it?"

"He wants me to go." Arline threw out the words as she would have thrown down a gauntlet.

"Of course he does," Patience responded, with a total lack of sympathy. "You can't well help going."

"But I won't," Arline protested mutinously.

"Why not?"

"I don't know the people."

Patience suddenly lost the saving grace whose name she bore.

"You need n't say it in that nippy tone," she observed calmly. "Madame Aucune is charming; you'll meet the best people in town in her parlours. I went to one of her receptions, last year. Stanwood and I were asked, this time, and Stan has," she smiled a little, as she aimed her thrust; "has tried his best to get out of his engagement with your brother, so that we could go again." She paused. Then, as she rested her elbow on the parapet, she went on, with cool decision, "Besides, Arline, it's not for you to choose in a matter like this. You had your own way in going to the Clarendon; you have your own way in sending Mr. Leleu off to church alone. You can't have your own way, though, when your social prejudice tries to block his political career. Everybody says you have married one of the coming men of the city. His career is in your hands, and you have no right to tear it to pieces, just because it gets between you and your whims."

Breathless, flushed, she paused and looked at Arline. Then she held out her hand, with a swift, free gesture as of an impetuous boy.

"Forgive me," she said. "I had no right to speak so. Somebody had to, though, and I knew none of the others would, or dared."

Arline ignored the hand; but her voice suddenly lowered, her eyes filled with tears.

"Perhaps you are right," she answered. "At all events, I will go."

And Patience went home, contented with her victory. Arline was not bad, she told herself; it was only that she

lacked reason. Once brought to see reason, however, she was ready to carry it out. Only — The girl sighed wearily. Even her young strength was tired with the effort of showing Arline the reason. It was as well for Patience Tyler, perhaps, that she could not foresee all the consequences of Arline's consent to go to the Aucune reception.

Even Arline, however, was ready to confess, the next night, that the evening had been an entire success. The friends of Leleu whom she had met, had received his bride with a cordiality which had lacked little of being deferential. It had been a gracious, friendly gathering. Arline, meeting there men and women whose lineage stretched far back into the old régime, whose social training had been in the best of continental schools, whose English out-classed her own in delicate precision, nevertheless had been accepted among them as a potential leader. The cause for a part of this lay in her queenly beauty and in her shimmering gown, the work of no provincial hand; a part of it lay in the innate graciousness of the French character. But by far the largest part, and the part which Arline saw fit to ignore entirely, lay in the position held among them by Leleu himself.

With the long lines of her gown wrapping in graceful curves about her feet, with one rounded arm thrown up across the back of her tall chair, Arline sat thinking the evening over. For the moment, the imperious look had left her face, to be replaced by the softer curves of contented ambition. Her lids drooped over her blue eyes, and her lips curved into a smile as peaceful as the smile of a happy child. Leleu, meanwhile, had remained outside to speak to the driver. Then an acquaintance had accosted him as he had passed through the office, and it was not until several minutes had gone by that he could free himself and follow Arline up-stairs. He opened the

door softly. Arline might well be tired; she might already be asleep, and it would be thoughtless to disturb her.

He entered the room so quietly that Arline, lost in her own thoughts, neither heard nor heeded his coming. And Leleu, entering, halted on the threshold to stare at the picture before him. He drew a short, sharp breath, for happiness can stab, as well as misery, and this was his, all his.

"Arline," he said gently, as he moved forward and laid his hand upon her hair.

With an almost imperceptible gesture, she nestled to the touch of his fingers.

"It was a charming evening, Amédée," she said dreamily.

Instantly the light sprang into his eyes.

"You enjoyed it? You liked them?" he questioned eagerly. "I am so happy to hear it, Arline."

She swept her gown aside and beckoned him to the broad arm of her chair.

"Sit down here. Yes, it was charming. Your friends were very good to me, Amédée."

"Of course. How could they help it?" he asked, with quaint directness.

She laughed.

"Easily. I was a stranger to them all; but they contrived to make me forget it. Tell me who they all were, Amédée. I want to know about them."

Her lids, still drooping heavily, shut out the sparkle of animation now kindling in her eyes, and Leleu saw no need to question the motive at the back of her words.

"It is good to know that you cared for them, Arline," he repeated happily. "They are my old-time friends, my political mates, many of them my kinsmen. Here in the city, Monsieur Aucune has been like a father to me,

Madame like the mother I have never known. They are loyal to me, these people, and now they are glad to welcome you among themselves, for your own sake as well as for mine."

Still with her head framed loosely in her encircling arm, she turned slightly and looked up at him. Some hitherto torpid nerve within her wakened into life and throbbed with pride, as she watched him sitting there, his thin, high-bred face alight with his content. Lowering her arm, she rested it upon his shoulder and gazed, the while, straight into his level, loving eyes. Then she dropped her arm by her side, and her own eyes vanished behind their shielding lids, as she urged, —

"But tell me about them, Amédée. I want to know who they all were : the stout, dark man with the order in his buttonhole, the little bald one who appeared to know everybody, the one who talked so long in the corner with you and the other men. He seemed so much excited about something. What did he really want?"

Leleu reddened slightly ; but he shrugged his shoulders with affected carelessness.

"Mere politics, Arline. The elections come, next week, you know."

"Do they? I had forgotten it was so soon. But what was he saying, Amédée? He talked so fast I could n't understand him at all."

"But I thought you had no trouble with Madame Aucune," he suggested.

She disdained the obvious digression.

"I have been in Paris, you know. But the man? What was he saying?"

Leleu laughed. In spite of himself, he was pleased at Arline's persistency. To his mind, it indicated a break in her previous apathy upon all points regarding his professional career. As yet, he had no notion how great a

share ambition played in shaping the course of Arline's life.

"It was only the usual election talk," he answered. "The fellow is an enthusiast, and he will harangue, whenever he can get the floor."

"Does it ever do any good?" she asked idly.

Leleu's reply was epigrammatic.

"It is better to drill than to pound."

She nodded in swift comprehension.

"So it seems to me. But there is so much pounding done, and it generally ends by breaking the point of the nail. Really, though, do you think there is any question about the election?"

He shook his head.

"None at all."

"And then?" she questioned still more idly than before.

"Then we shall simply continue the policy of the last few years."

Her lids drooped still lower.

"And the Conservatives?" she asked.

Mockingly he shrugged his shoulders, and answered with the careless phrase so dear to the habitant tongue, —

"*'Sais pas.*"

"Oh, but I am a Conservative," she rebuked him, with a smile; "and Brooke says this election means pennies or dollars to him, according to the way it goes."

"I am sorry." Leleu spoke with sudden gravity. "It is so with many of them, I fear. I should be sorry to have your brother suffer in his business; but it is not possible that the business interests of one class should stand against the real good of the country."

Again she lifted her eyes to his.

"Is it true, then, what that man was saying," she asked slowly; "that, if the Liberals win in the general

election, they will have a dissolution here and a provincial election?"

He laughed.

"Did I not tell you the fellow is an enthusiast," he parried. Nevertheless, he reddened once more, and Arline saw that her question had been no random shot.

"What would it be for?" she queried. "I see no good in that. I asked Monsieur St. Just about it, and he said it would be merely to strengthen the Liberal hand."

Leleu caught at the side issue.

"St. Just? Was he there?"

A mocking smile lighted Arline's face.

"Brave boy! And is this the way you watch your bride? Monsieur St. Just was not only there; but I talked with him for a long, long time."

"When was that?"

She glanced up into his frowning face. Then she drew his hand towards her and fell to playing with its slim, dark fingers.

"When you were demagoguing with the man in the corner, and leaving me to shift for myself," she replied, with a merry audacity which, at another time, Leleu would have found indescribably winning. "He was very polite to me, and explained ever so many things that I had heard you talking about, things I had n't been able to understand." Then, letting his hand slip from her lap, she rose, yawning slightly. "You know, Amédée," she added; "you have never liked Monsieur St. Just; I really think you have never been quite fair to him. But I am sleepy. Good night."

Leleu closed the door behind her; then, facing about, he took one or two swift turns up and down the room. Like St. Just! It was only during the past nine months that he had gained his first real inkling of the measure of liking which rightly should be dealt out to this man

who now was professing to explain to Arline the tenets of her own husband's political creed. Like him! The blood rolled up across Leleu's swarthy cheek. Even now, nine months afterward, the affair was still branded on his mind in red-hot lines.

Less than a week after his engagement to Arline had been announced, he had met St. Just in the Ring, one night. St. Just had spoken flippantly; then he had flushed under Leleu's curt rebuke. However, he had gone on his way, leaving the rebuke unanswered. The next afternoon, Leleu, abandoning his desk on the ground floor of the Parliament Buildings, had sauntered up the stairs and taken his stand in the open doorway of the assembly chamber. A dull debate was in progress, and the members, reading, writing and lounging in their seats, were wholly regardless of the discussion. Leleu had loitered there for a moment, his eyes wandering idly over the familiar details: the dark green hangings above the Speaker's chair, the messenger boys half-reclining on the curved steps of the dais, the gowned figures beside the table in the middle of the floor and the careless, inattentive faces of the members. Then, just as he had been about to turn away, his own attention had been caught by the tiniest of the messengers, a mere scrap of humanity in Tuxedo coat and shining linen, who pushed under his elbow in the doorway, took a running slide up the aisle and laid a fresh copy of the *Cartier* upon the desk of the Chief of the Opposition. The *Cartier*, picked up with listless fingers, was suddenly gripped in two nervous fists, turned, turned back again. The debate droned on; but, for some reason, Leleu's eyes were fixed upon the frowning face which bent above the *Cartier*, and the last phrases of the debate fell upon unhearing ears. Then the debate had ended, and the Chief of the Opposition had arisen and had caught the Speaker's eye.

For weeks afterward, the city had buzzed with the reports of the speech which followed. It exhumed all the long-buried race antagonisms, it warned the members to be on their guard against possible bad faith upon the part of the Liberals, and it took its text in a trenchant phrase, caught from the paper in the Chief's hand, *A Dream of the New Régime*.

And Amédée Leleu, standing there to listen to the blame which was cast upon his race and party, to the predictions of its faithlessness and its ultimate and consequent disruption, had gone white to the lips and turned his eyes away, as he had met the mirthful eyes and the malicious little smile of Achille St. Just who was looking steadily at him from a corner of the press gallery. That night, Leleu had telephoned to Arline that an unexpected engagement prevented his seeing her. Instead, he had walked to Sillery and back, through the wind and the fast deepening snow.

He had known that St. Just was noxious. Up to that hour, however, Leleu had never regarded him as dangerous. Now he had begun to doubt.

And now Arline had gone away, leaving him to ponder upon her last words, barbed as they were with the charge of unfairness. For an instant, he turned to the door, meaning to follow her and tell her the reason for his dislike of the man. Then he shrugged his shoulders and dropped into a chair, as once and for all he abandoned that idea. It was his place to guard his wife. It would be a direct acknowledgment of his own inability, could he only accomplish that end by blackening her mind and his own tongue with outspoken charges, however grounded, against another man. Nevertheless, in that instant of hesitation and subsequent decision, there was summed up a determining chapter in the history of Amédée Leleu. Had the tradition of his race unbent to the point of allow-

ing him to speak out to Arline and tell her why he believed St. Just untrustworthy, he might have broken off at its thinnest edge the wedge of trouble which in time would threaten to tear asunder the fabric of their home.

Alone in her dressing-room, meanwhile, Arline dropped into a chair, and the satisfied smile came back to her lips. The smile was not for Leleu, however, but rather for St. Just whose low parting words were still treading through her brain.

"You see it is as I have told you, Madame Leleu. The chance is open to you, and it is a rare one. I thought it before. To-night, I am sure. The election is near, and it is certain in its outcome. After the election, there may be stirring events in the province, and it would be a wonderful time to establish a salon where the men of both parties could meet and talk, freely and without rancour, of the events of the hour. Perhaps we each should gain, by knowing more of the plans of the other. You see how it is here, to-night: Liberals everywhere, save for me who am taken on sufferance and because I am a friend of Madame Aucune's Parisian cousins. Even as it is, you see they talk of matters of import. Picture to yourself what it would be, were there men here who could speak with authority upon the other side. Who could accomplish that so easily as Madame Leleu?" And, rising, he left her to her approaching host.

The Tylers, that same evening, were watching *Twelfth Night* at the Auditorium, and, between the acts, talking with the eagerness that long years of constant intercourse had been powerless to abate. Suddenly the talk shifted to the Leleus.

"It is the old race war, done small," Stanwood said gravely, at length.

Patience folded her programme into a neat square, then converted the square into a paper boat and balanced the

boat in the palm of her hand ; but it was plain that her thoughts were not upon the fragile dory, nor yet upon the spotless glove beneath its keel.

"Then you think it exists?" she asked.

"I do."

"What will be the end of it?"

Stanwood's grave face lighted with a whimsical smile, as he had recourse to the careless phrase which Leleu, an hour later, was to use.

"*'Sais pas.*"

"But it is awful," Patience persisted ; "that is, if it really does exist. For my part, I think it is only election talk, and will disappear as soon as the election is over. It's no more sincere than Arline's fuss because she has to make all the concessions with Mr. Leleu."

But her brother's gravity had dropped back upon him.

"No more sincere," he echoed ; "but — no less." And, with the words, there came the soft clash of the prompter's bell, and the curtain rose upon the final act.

The inevitable explanation and reconciliation followed, and a smiling *Viola* bowed her thanks for the patter of applause. The curtain slid down again, and the orchestra, coming to prompt attention, swung into their conventional finale of *God Save the King*. Then of a sudden Patience started and her fingers shut on the little boat with a nervous vigour which crushed it to a shapeless bit of crumpled paper.

From a burly, red-faced Frenchman at her right, there had come a low, but unmistakable hiss.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NOT even the most ardent politician, on the morning of the day set aside for the general elections, could fail to feel his enthusiasm ebbing a little, as he looked out of doors. It ebbed faster still, when he stepped out into the raw drizzle of the November rain. The past few days had been full of a hot excitement. All the old race antagonisms had been taken out and aired, all the old party grievances and abuses had been inspected with the minutest care. Knots of Frenchmen had been heard singing *La Marseillaise* in the streets; knots of Englishmen had held impromptu caucuses on the terrace, in the Château corridors, on the post office steps. It was as if the parties had been on a strife to see which could blow the larger bubble of excitement. And then, with the first pattering raindrop on election morning, the bubble had burst, and the citizens went quietly plodding away under their umbrellas, in search of the nearest polling place. The excitement had vanished with the gray dawn; but there remained a certain tension of waiting to see what the day would bring forth. And, to an outsider watching the arena, the whole antagonism could have been summed up in two brief phrases: Canada for the English, or Canada for the Canadians. But the Canadians were — what?

St. Just was busy on election day, unduly busy. He had marked out for himself in advance a day of loitering about the streets, of dropping in at certain offices, of sharing — and heeding — an infinite number of discussions as to the probable result of the day's elections. St. Just was

open to conviction. He was quite as ready to hear to an end the views of a Liberal senator as of a Conservative. Moreover, he was convinced that, on the Liberal side, the provincial plan of action was by no means ended with that election day. He was as yet unable to fathom the limit of that plan, although from occasional hints he had gathered, he was sure that he knew its trend. However, though he admired the vigour of the contemplated action, he forced himself to remember that, for the present, at least, he was a Conservative. Accordingly, he had set his wits to work to plan a mate to oppose the check of the Liberal party. Nothing as yet had occurred to him. He had hoped to pick it up, bit by bit, out of the pavements, that day.

St. Just hated rain. The gray skies and the chilly wind went to his marrow, and he gave a little shiver of discomfort and disgust, as he ran up the steps leading to his office, for a word with his chief before setting off for his day's wandering. Instead of the chief, however, an office boy awaited him, and the boy was the bearer of fateful tidings. The chief had been taken ill, suddenly and seriously. Even at so critical a time as that, he must not leave his bed. St. Just must take his place, that day, remain in the office and see that the paper maintained its clean-cut line of policy.

St. Just's face fell. Then he gritted his teeth, glanced out at the cold, wet pavements, at the procession of umbrellas moving towards St. John Street, and swore softly to himself. That done, he took off his coat, kicked his goloshes into a corner and seated himself at his desk. In his disappointment, he took no heed of the fact that, as a rule, the best plan of action shapes itself, not in the crowded street, but in the familiar quiet of one's own daily working place. St. Just, clear-eyed and resolute, was humming to himself a song of the boulevards, when he locked

his desk, late that afternoon. Inside the desk and in a secret drawer were the rough drafts of two editorials, ready, one or other of them, to be put into type on the instant that the Liberals should declare their policy. St. Just's activity, that day, had not been limited wholly to receiving and making comment upon the election rumours which were flying about the streets.

Towards noon, Sir Morris, coated from chin to heel, jovial and dripping, appeared in the Tylers' library.

"No news yet," he averred. "No; don't touch the coat, Miss Tyler; it's beastly wet. Can't I put it out on the landing somewhere?"

Patience nodded her assent, as she poked the fire into a glow and drew up a chair to the blaze. Sir Morris, meanwhile, heaped his dripping coat and umbrella on the floor outside, and came striding back into the room.

"That's a ripping fire," he commented. "One appreciates it, after spending the morning in the streets, trying to chase up a little excitement. This is no sort of an election day. At home, a country poorhouse could get up a better show of enthusiasm. Have you been out?"

Patience smiled.

"I had an errand at Paquet's," she said demurely.

Sir Morris laughed.

"I thought as much. In fact, I looked in under every umbrella I met, on the chance of finding you there. What did you think of it?"

"That they let off their powder too soon," she responded promptly. "It's all fizz and no crack."

"Bravo, Patsy!" Stanwood's voice observed from the threshold. "Your sentiment does you proud, though I've not the least notion what it means. How's the weather, Sir Morris?"

"Wet. I left a sample outside the door."

Stanwood came forward to rest one foot on the low fender beside his sister's chair.

"I found it, all right. I'm not sure that your umbrella will open again, though. Have you heard any news?"

"Nothing yet. I met Leleu, just now, and he said it would be impossible to tell until to-night."

"So close as that?" Stanwood lifted his brows. "I supposed it was a foregone conclusion."

"I fancy it is, only they don't wish to rejoice prematurely. The winning crew always talks off, on the eve of a race."

"What time will the returns be in?" Patience asked restlessly.

"Not too early, though the western ones won't count for much, and they'll be the last. The East is the danger point. But that reminds me, Pat, Brooke Lord has put in a private wire, and he wants us to come up there, to-night. He said he had telephoned to you, Sir Morris."

"Yes, he has. But what makes him so keen about it?" Sir Morris queried, as he crossed his long legs and stuck one foot towards the blaze. "He's no politician."

"No; but he has a good deal at stake. He is anxious for a new scheme of supervision of the forestry lands. He thinks the wood is going into American hands and the money into the wrong pocket," Stanwood answered, while he drew up a chair and settled himself in a position akin to that of Sir Morris.

"Oh, I see," Sir Morris observed. "Then this election really has been an expensive time to him."

Stanwood Tyler's foot dropped with a crash to the floor, and he sat forward in his chair.

"Who has been talking that rot in your ears?" he demanded sharply.

Sir Morris searched the deep places of his mind.

"Why, really, I don't know, Tyler. Perhaps it was —

yes, I remember now, St. Just was the one who spoke of it first."

"Who else?"

"Nobody of any account. I heard one or two fellows speak of it at supper, one night; but I fancy they had been talking to St. Just. In fact, I know one of them had."

"And they said?" Stanwood demanded for a third time.

Sir Morris reddened. Then he glanced appealingly at Patience. Then he answered honestly, —

"That Brooke Lord might have to retrench a little, unless the election went his way; that he was going into it on no shilling basis; that —" Sir Morris reddened again; "that Brooke Lord was far-seeing, when he let his sister marry Leleu."

"What!" Patience burst out indignantly. "He opposed it with all his might and main. What would he gain by the marriage?"

"They say Monsieur Aucune rules the forestry legislation," Sir Morris reminded her.

Stanwood dropped his folded hands between his knees and looked up at his sister resignedly.

"Patsy," he said; "would you just as soon go into the other room, while I swear?" Then he started to his feet and pushed aside his chair impatiently. "The whole thing is a blasted lie," he said then, with a quiet vehemence which added infinitely to the weight of his assertion. "St. Just knows it is a lie, though it started from him and was spread by him. I know Brooke Lord. I understand his business. I have, as you might say, audited his accounts. Not one cent of money and not one shred of unlawful influence has gone into this election. Brooke Lord may not be great; but he is honest to the core of his soul, and his hands are clean. I am willing to stake on his honour my own citizenship in America."

Sir Morris looked up at him with shining eyes.

"You're a good fellow, Tyler, and I believe you," was his terse comment.

But Patience, after the fashion of woman, broke in upon the strain.

"Meanwhile," she said gayly; "here are we, three independent and impartial aliens in a city racked by party strife. We all are horribly out of the running, and we need each other's moral support. Stanwood, while you convince Sir Morris that he must stay to lunch with us, I'll go down to arrange for his place at table."

A little pause followed her going. Then Sir Morris asked, —

"Tyler, what about St. Just, anyhow?"

Stanwood Tyler turned curtly on his heel.

"Achille St. Just is the prince of devils," he answered, with terse brevity. "There's no more clever workman in the city of Quebec, to-day. All he needs now is the right kind of a tool, and then no one knows the mischief he can do."

Sir Morris pondered.

"Do you — has it ever seemed to you —"

But Stanwood cut in, directly as was his wont.

"That he is in the way to find his tool? Yes. It has."

Sir Morris sighed.

"Poor Leleu!" he said.

Jimmy was the last one to appear at dinner, that night. Even Mrs. Brooke Lord's loyal patience for him was wearing thin, when he came striding into the room, hilarious and wholly unrepentant.

"You fellows would best take to the woods, Leleu," he said to his brother-in-law over his shoulder, as he paused to shake hands with Patience. "Your hour has struck. I'm just in from the club, and they say there that the Conservatives are winning all along the line."

Leleu laughed carelessly.

"So Arline has been telling me," he answered.

Jimmy raised his brows.

"Arline! What does she know about politics?"

"She is learning," Leleu responded, with a little accent of pride. "Your sister is taking great interest in the elections."

"The deuce she is! Which side is she on?"

"She has n't stepped down yet," Patience interposed saucily. "You must wait till to-morrow for that. To-day, she is torn between sisterly sympathy and wifely devotion."

Jimmy looked at her keenly for an instant.

"Are all women made like that?" he asked her then.

And Patience, heedless of her own rising colour, made answer with laughing assurance, —

"Yes, all."

The answer had been intended solely for Jimmy Lord. Nevertheless, as Patience lifted her eyes, she became conscious of Leleu's eyes fixed upon her with an eager question which, at her trivial words, relaxed into a look of absolute relief.

After dinner, a half-dozen other guests dropped in, Conservatives all of them and among them a senator or two, for politics is more or less a matter of heredity, and Mrs. Brooke Lord's father had been one of the strong men of Sir John MacDonald's day. His daughter, albeit her husband was, as Stanwood Tyler had said, no politician, nevertheless held true to the old tradition, and her drawing-rooms were familiar ground to many of the leaders of her father's party. Even the Tylers and Sir Morris felt themselves outsiders, that night; and Leleu, the only avowed Liberal of them all, was plainly ill at ease among them. Jimmy's early report had proved to be quite unfounded, and, as the evening lengthened, the faces of the

Conservatives lengthened with it. Then, when the eastern provinces sent in their returns of the Liberal gain, Leleu, jubilant, excited, felt that no longer could he hold himself down into outward harmony with the prevailing gloom. He turned to Arline for sympathy; but Arline, quite at the other end of the room, was wholly absorbed in a prominent senator, occasionally speaking a few words, but for the most part listening with an eager little smile to the sentences which flowed from his lips.

Leleu waited until he had caught her eye. Then, lifting his brows and nodding towards the door, he sent her a swift glance of question. She looked back at him calmly, smiled a little and then resumed her interrupted sentence. There was no haste in her manner, no pretext that she had failed to understand. She had merely yielded to him the attention she would have given to a fretful child, and Leleu could only turn away, just as the child would have done. His eyes alone showed how keen had been his pain.

From the other side of the room, Jimmy was watching. In fact, in these latter days, it often happened that Jimmy was watching. He had come to care much for Leleu; caring, he could not be wholly unconscious of Arline's too frequent disregard of her husband. As yet, however, he had said no word. He had an instinctive feeling that the time would come when he would speak, freely and with force. In the meantime, he would hold his peace, and merely seek to lighten Leleu's occasional black hours as best he could.

Now, when he saw Arline's quiet disdain of her husband's manifest wish, Jimmy felt a sudden longing to smite her, as he had now and then smitten her in the days of their remote childhood. She was so calm, so beautiful, so insolently regardless of all but what concerned her own pleasure. Under the admiring eyes of her senile companion, she could sit and listen to his inane talk, heedless

of the fact that her husband was tacitly begging her to come away with him into some place where he could rejoice over the overpowering victory of his own friends. Leleu's eyes had been alight, his smile radiant, as he had waited to meet the eye of his wife. Only Jimmy Lord had seen the light go out, the radiance dim, as he had turned away. And Jimmy Lord was not one to hesitate. He cast one glance into the corner where Sir Morris and Patience were talking gayly. Then he went striding across the room to Leleu's side.

"Oh, I say," he observed jovially; "this place is nothing but a vale of tears. If this keeps on, they'll call a chaplain and set him to reading prayers for the dead Conservative party. I'm a Conservative; but even I get tired of too much woe. Let's go over to the Drill Hall and see them riot properly." And, with a word to Mrs. Brooke Lord, he went away and took Leleu with him.

"How did you happen to go there in the first place?" he asked, an hour later, as they went tramping out the Grande Allée under the ink-black midnight sky.

They had found the Drill Hall crowded with a noisy, hilarious, alcoholic throng. The smoke-laden air was torn with cheers, as, one after one, the returns had been flashed upon the screen. Up in the gallery, a fringe of small boys tootled and blared upon tin horns at each new Liberal victory, or gave forth lusty groans, when some Ontario district sent in its tale of a Conservative majority. One or two turns of the floor had sufficed both for Jimmy and for Leleu. They had halted at a telephone long enough for the Frenchman to send his congratulations to his chief; then, coming out again into the clean, chill night air, as if by mutual consent, they turned and walked westward out the Grande Allée.

It had been snowing fast, when they entered the Drill

Hall. The snow had stopped falling by now, however; but it lay, soft and white, over the roadways and clung to the branches of the trees like a filmy blanket of unspun wool. Over their heads, the starless, cloudless sky hung like a black velvet pall above the electric lights. Far away to the westward, the clouds lay heaped together, white and soft as the snow that was heaped in the trees; and up and up from the white cloud-heaps stretched long banners of white mist, striping the velvet pall with lines of silver lace.

Leleu paused for an instant, before he answered Jimmy's question.

"Because Arline wished it," he answered simply then.

"But this was your function," Jimmy said, with some impatience. "You might have known, Leleu, that Molly's house would be a hotbed of Conservatism, on a night like this."

"I had no thought of intruding," Leleu replied a little curtly.

"Hang it, man! That's not what I mean. You are one of the family now; you can't well be an intruder. But the whole affair was bound to get on your nerves. You must have had other invitations."

Leleu tramped forward steadily, his eyes on the great white bank of cloud.

"How did it happen that Monsieur Aucune did n't ask you there?" Jimmy persisted, after a pause.

"He did."

"Then why the deuce did n't you go?" Jimmy asked tartly. "We were glad to have you with us, of course; but you were sure to be on the rack in any case. A night like this, a fellow is best off with his kind."

Leleu, still with his eyes fixed on the cloud bank, answered briefly, —

"A fellow is always best off with his wife."

Jimmy did not stop to argue the position.

"Take her with you," he said, with equal brevity.

There came a little silence. Then Leleu's words dropped heavily across the silence.

"I tried."

The silence came again. Jimmy broke it.

"Leleu," he said, as he rested his hand on the Frenchman's shoulder; "you are a good fellow. I hope I am one, too. Anyhow, I don't want to interfere. Still, if the time ever comes that I can be of use, you can count on it that I'm ready to stand by you."

The next night, a species of bedlam reigned in the Château courtyard. The windows were full of faces, the walls were black with people, the yard itself was edged with carriages drawn up in a hollow square about the citadel band in the middle. There were waving torches, jets of red fire and, over them all, the cold white electric light shone calmly down, reducing all the rest to the tawdry glitter of display. Now and then a wave of cheering swept the crowd, or the band burst into the rhythmic beat of a martial air. Then the clamour died away again, until the buzz of talk could be plainly heard, only to be drowned out once more, as some fresh movement around the doorway aroused the throng to new enthusiasm. All election day and all the next day, the victorious candidate had remained invisible in his rooms at the Château. That night had been fixed for his departure, and Quebec had gathered there to make of his departure a royal ovation.

At last the crowd, pressing forward to the very steps, parted slightly and fell backward, as a tall, slim form came to the doorway, looked out, then halted for one brief instant at the top of the short flight of steps. That one instant was enough. The brown Château walls rocked to the applause which drowned even the crash of the band. Then, slowly and with infinite, but kindly dignity, the

tall figure came down the steps, through the ranks of cheering lips, between the rows of curious eyes, stepped into his carriage and, with one last bow, was driven slowly out of the court and out of sight, a figure of steady, kindly dignity, facing forward to the new duties that awaited him.

Brooke Lord had halted in the cloistered entrance of the courtyard, and stood looking thoughtfully after the carriage and the escorting mob which thronged about its wheels. Then he turned to Leleu who stood at his elbow.

"It is impossible not to admire the man," he said idly. "And yet—they say that every man has his price. What do you suppose, Leleu, your leader's price would be?"

And neither Brooke Lord, as he spoke, nor Leleu, as he made laughing answer, paid any heed to the fact that, behind them, Achille St. Just had halted just long enough to catch the final phrase.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“OH, come now !” Jimmy Lord expostulated, half in surprise, half in admiration.

Mrs. Brooke Lord looked up from her letters.

“What is it, Jimmy ?”

As if startled at the question, Jimmy lowered his paper and stared at his sister-in-law.

“Beg pardon, Molly. You were saying ?”

“Nothing. I was waiting to hear you say it. What called forth your exclamation, Jimmy ?”

Jimmy laughed a bit shamefacedly.

“Did I talk out loud ? Sorry. But my astonishment got the better of me. Have you looked at the paper, this morning ?”

She shook her head.

“No. I was late, and only had time to give Brooke his coffee. What is it ?”

Jimmy stirred his own coffee reflectively.

“It’s a trick,” he said ; “a flagrant trick ; but it’s a mighty clever one. Of course, all the Conservatives are furious over this provincial dissolution, following as it does on the heels of the election. It does look funny : no warning, no split, nothing to give reason for it.”

“I suppose they say it is to strengthen their hand, while they can,” Mrs. Brooke Lord observed.

“Precisely. Still, it’s a bit like a man who tries to show five aces, when four have been honestly dealt him. Well, last night’s *Cartier* called on the Conservatives to manifest their disapproval by refusing to put up any candidate at all for the elections.”

Mrs. Brooke Lord shook her head again.

"I really can't see what good that will do."

Jimmy laughed.

"Where's your famous scent for politics, Molly? Nominally, it will register their belief that the dissolution is illegal. Really —"

"Well?" she jogged him.

Jimmy laughed once more.

"In reality, it will reduce the party to the state of the cats of Kilkenny. Being politicians, they must fight; they are bound to do so. Lacking an outside enemy, they will fall on each other and, inside of a month, the political fur will begin to fly. Hullo! What's this?"

Mrs. Brooke Lord's eyes rested on his thin, close-shut lips, and she waited. She had lived long enough in the house with Jimmy Lord to know that he would speak when he was ready, and not till then. At length Jimmy looked up.

"Funny thing, that," he said carelessly. "This quotes the *Cartier* as saying that a certain well-known Liberal has given out that there may be a marked change soon in the leadership of their own party. The *Cartier* has been guessing." But a cloud was in his eyes, as he rose and left the table.

Just outside the door, he met Patience. Furred to her chin and her cheeks bright with the morning wind, the girl was tramping westward at a great pace. Under her feet, bits of snow still clung to the pavement, where they crackled sharply beneath her tread. The distant hills were white, and the sky above them shone with the light of a deep-toned sapphire.

"Whither?" Jimmy demanded, as he lifted his hat, then dropped into her long, swinging step.

"Anywhere, so long as there is air and sunshine," she replied alertly. "These last gray days have been so

dreary that I rushed out, this morning, to make the most of the clear weather. How is Molly?"

"Beating her brows over the latest vagaries of your party, Miss Liberal."

"What about the latest game of yours, Mr. Conservative?" she retorted.

"You've read the papers, then?"

"Of course. Stanwood was so excited that he forgot his second cup of coffee. What do you think will be the result?"

Jimmy summed up the situation tersely.

"No end of a row; no end of men downed; some scandal, and a few men left to clamber up into the chief seats."

"A few good men," she suggested.

"A few good fighters," he corrected her.

Dauntlessly she shook her head.

"In time the best man wins."

"In eternity, you mean," Jimmy observed, with some pessimism. "In any case, it's a jolly row, and no great credit to the province. The only good I can see in it is that Leleu may get his chance. I hear Aucune has advised him to stand for Tête Joli."

"Really? He is bound to get it," Patience said alertly. "He is clever enough, and I suppose he has any amount of influence. By the way, leaving politics, were you at your sister's, last night?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I was," he said gloomily; "but it was n't leaving politics in the least."

"What do you mean?"

"That the place was a veritable caucus. I was the only noncombatant there. She'd pulled together all of Leleu's cronies and all of Molly's venerables, and packed them solid into a twelve by fifteen room. The punch was

good, and they liked it. By the time they had had a second glass, every man of them all had mounted his hobby, and they galloped round and round in a circle, with Arline in the middle for ring master and St. Just beside her as clown." Jimmy ended in a swift climax of disgust.

"Monsieur St. Just!" Patience said quickly. "I wish Arline did n't like that man."

"Arline does n't care for him," Jimmy answered carelessly. "He is an old friend of Leleu; that's all."

"Friend! He's a perfect—Trojan horse," Patience said, with unexpected viciousness. "He is a hollow mockery and a whitewashed sepulchre, and Arline ought to turn him out of her house."

"How can she?" Jimmy queried.

"The way I did," Patience replied vehemently. "There! I had no business to tell of it, But I wish you could make Arline snub him a bit. He is as dangerous as a small-pox epidemic, and as deadly."

Jimmy eyed her askance.

"You don't like St. Just?" he inquired placidly.

"No; I don't. But tell me about Arline. Was she lovely? And who else was there? And is it a fact that she is going to receive, every Monday night? Stanwood and I wanted to go; but we had promised Sir Morris that we'd dine with him at the Falls, and we were late about getting home."

"Oh." Jimmy's cadence was a falling one. "So that was where you all were?"

"Yes. It was the last chance to sit out on the gallery, this year; it is growing cold so fast. Sir Morris said he should have asked you, only he knew you would have to be at the Leleus'."

"He might have given me the chance to refuse," Jimmy said bluntly. Then he added, with equal bluntness, "Oh, I say, I went to church with Leleu, Sunday."

"How queer!" Patience commented, with rather excessive frankness.

Jimmy frowned thoughtfully.

"Yes, it was queer, mighty queer. I can smell the incense yet. I'd not been to the Basilica since I was a youngster; I've no idea what it was all about, but it was no end impressive, and it was good to see Leleu's face, while he went in for it all."

Patience nodded, in swift comprehension. Then she added, —

"But how did you happen to go?"

"Gave myself to Moloch, or Juggernaut, or some of those fellows. I dropped in there early, and I happened to find Arline on her nerves."

"What is the matter now?" Patience demanded sharply.

Jimmy eyed her bright face with a brotherly benignity.

"Now," he echoed. "Well, I fancy you've just about hit it, Miss Tyler. It generally is *now*. Of course, Arline is my sister, and I must n't tell tales; but you are there so often that it's not necessary. Leleu is a Catholic. Arline says that he's a bigot; but the poor chap is n't always in a bed of roses. This time, it's the Vice Royalty racket. Leleu is asked to the Laval function, you see. His uncle looks out for that. Arline was none too sure that she approved of that, in the first place; she was a good deal less sure, when she heard that Molly had been asked to Spencer Wood to meet them. By the time she had discovered that Sir Morris has been able to get us a snug corner for Thursday night, she was absolutely certain that she disapproved the whole affair entirely. I tried to convince her that Brooke was out of it, too. Leleu tried to make her understand that, as a rule, wives were n't asked to Laval. Then we came off together, and Leleu looked so down on his luck that I asked him to take me to church with him."

"And he did?"

"Yes, even me," Jimmy answered whimsically. "Still, do you know," he added, with sudden gravity; "I've a notion he did n't mind having one of the family with him. So far as I know, Arline has never once been there with him, and — and it must be a bit galling to his pride."

Jimmy had spoken truthfully and with unerring insight. The attitude of Arline had been galling to Leleu's pride, very galling. Never for one instant had he hoped, or even wished, to convert his wife to the tenets of his own church. Nevertheless, it had hurt him sorely that she, knowing how dear to him was his church, had never failed to ignore the claims of that church, or to treat them with open disdain.

Week after week, Arline watched him set out to the Basilica alone, watched him return without a word of interest or question. His days of fasting she treated with unspoken scorn; his books of devotion and his chaplet were relegated to an inconspicuous corner behind a closet door. Petty as it all was, it yet amounted to a species of domestic torture. Leleu, too proud, too hurt in his pride, to stoop to notice it, could only shut up within the hiding-places of his life both the hurt and the undying love of his church, and hold his peace and make no sign. And Arline, beautiful, unrelenting, watched it all with her hard, imperious smile and, reading her husband like an open book, told herself that the time would come when, by sheer force of will, she would divorce him from the Church of Rome and bend him to the more plastic sway of her own episcopacy. Her aim in this, however, was not Leleu's spiritual redemption, but merely adherence to the convention of her own race and class. Leleu, on his side, was not slow to read her motive. To his mind, it only increased the difficulty of his position. Beneath his dark skin the tides of his being ran hot and swift. It

was not always easy to keep his devotions quiet and free from petulance, under conditions such as these.

By degrees, as the time went on, he formed the habit of dropping in for early mass at the Seminary chapel. Arline was always late on Sunday morning; she never stopped to inquire where he spent his time between rising and breakfast. For that hour, his devotions could be quite unquestioned. And so, morning after morning, he entered the familiar gateway, opened the heavy doors at the left and came into the rich-coloured shadow of the little chapel where he had so often knelt as a boy. Kneeling there again in the shade of one of the dark-veined pillars, he buried his face in his hands and prayed with a fervour to which his boyhood had been a stranger, prayed that the day might come when his wedded life, freed from the pricking opposition, might at last be all and more than that of which he yet dreamed. For Leleu, in spite of all and perhaps because of all, loved his wife with a loyalty that lacked but little of adoration. If only he could be all in all to her, as she was all in all to him! Even now, she had moments, hours, when she showed herself gentle and loving. With him and with him alone it rested to make those hours unbroken. But how? He bowed his head yet lower. Then he rose, and went forward to the altar rail.

The question came back upon him, a week later, as he sat in the Hall of Promotions, listening to the farewell compliments exchanged between the university and Vice Royalty. High above all the heads and from opposite ends of the wall, the compliments repeated themselves. The Vice Royal arms, surmounted by the flags of England, France and America, faced down the hall towards the arms of Laval mounted on the tricolour and topped with the English flag. Education was extending to statecraft a welcoming hand; but education in Laval was firmly

based upon the three broad stripes of blue and white and red. The audience assembled beneath the flags showed somewhat of the same distinction. Gathered on the dais was the knot of officials, French and English, dressed in their most formal array. Here an order, there a uniform broke the dark monotony of frock coats, and the half-dozen women of the group added their touch of dainty colour to the scene. Facing them from the floor sat long ranks of clergy, some with simple soutane and beretta, some clad in robes of richest silk, ermine-faced and hooded with green and blue and purple and scarlet. Everywhere were the tonsured heads and the lean, ascetic faces of the French priesthood, standing out in sharp relief against the more pompous luxury of the group of statesmen above.

From his seat in the gallery, Leleu's keen eye swept over it all, resting here and there upon a well-known face, contrasting it all with the day, seven years before, when he, frock-coated and green-sashed, had stood by the outer door, watching those same ranks of clergy file in to do honour to the highest dignitary whom Rome could send them. Then, eager, resolute, he had counted upon the day when all things should be in his grasp. Now, bidden to the inner circle of things, his grasp growing stronger upon all that he had then dreamed of wishing, he yet was missing his hold upon the greatest thing of all. That was Arline.

Quite without reference to the bland compliments which Vice Royalty was lavishing upon his university, his dark brows gathered into a frown. No wonder Arline had been annoyed. Accustomed to the ways of English and American universities, she found it hard to realize the purely masculine nature of the functions of Laval. And, quite naturally, it was galling to her pride to have Molly, by reason of her ancestry, and Patience, by reason of Sir

Morris, bidden to a higher seat at the civil function, that night, than he had commanded for her. Perhaps he could have commanded it, had he been more strenuous in regard to the matter; but it had never once occurred to him that Arline would care so much. He had been absent at Tête Joli, when the preliminary plans had been announced. The first days of his return had been days of mad haste, of endless interviews with his chief, of plan and counter-plan how best to carry his county against the old Conservative so long in power. Now he reproached himself for his self-absorption. Women cared for pomp and ceremony and Vice Royal farewells. Arline was very much a woman; she was not, however, the woman to submit to being left in an inconspicuous corner. Rather than that, she would remain at home.

In fact, had it not been for Jimmy, she would have adhered to her resolution to remain at home, that night. By some mistake, Leleu's cards had been late in coming, and Arline had iterated her determination not to go near the city hall in any case. In vain Leleu had coaxed and pleaded; in vain he had sought to use a gentle force. Arline had resisted, resisted by turns with cold dignity and childish petulance, and Leleu at length had given up the fight and prepared to go alone. Then, that morning, Jimmy had dropped in upon them while they were still at breakfast. He had been as jovial and apparently as careless as ever; but there had been a steely glint in his eyes. Leleu had excused himself and gone away to his office, leaving the brother and sister alone together, apparently engrossed in random gossip. An hour later, he had been called to the telephone. A husky voice, which he had been slow to recognize as that of his wife, had briefly informed him that she had decided to go to the reception, that night.

At lunch, Arline's eyes were heavy, her smile forced;

but her whole manner to him was marked with a gentle deference to which of late it had been a stranger. Later, as he was dressing for the afternoon, she knocked at his door.

"I wanted to make sure that your things were right," she said, as she crossed the room and halted at his side before the mirror. "You must look your best, to-day."

He smiled, not at her, but at her face in the mirror. For a long moment their eyes met by way of the glass, met and hung together. Then, turning suddenly, he took her in his arms.

"Arline," he asked; "do you really care?"

He felt the pressure of her round cheek against his shoulder. Then she lifted her head.

"Amédée," she said abruptly; "I wish it could be, always and always, like this."

He made no effort to evade her meaning. Instead, he asked quietly, —

"Is there any reason that it can not?"

She broke away from him and faced him.

"Yes, there is."

The colour left his face.

"What then?" he asked slowly, the words catching in his throat.

"Myself. Wait!" She lifted her hand imperiously. "Don't deny it. We both of us know it, so why deny? Now and then, I am like two different people. One of them loves you, Amédée, loves you really. The other —"

"Well?" he urged her.

She shook her head.

"I don't know," she answered sadly. "It is all so cold. It loves nothing very much, except bare living, and even that must be lived in a given way. Don't blame me, Amédée. We women none of us are always just alike. Always we all want love; but sometimes it satisfies us,

sometimes it seems to leave us empty, and we turn away to other things."

He stood silent for long minutes, his dark eyes fixed upon the carpet at his feet. Then slowly he raised his eyes and faced her.

"Arline," he said; "I would give up all things outside, for the sake of holding your love."

She lifted her eyes to his; but she spoke no word.

"I mean it, dear," he urged. "Gladly, more gladly than I can say, I would turn away from it all, my career, my election. I would give it all up, if, by the giving, I could draw you closer to me."

Suddenly her lip curled, and she spoke sharply.

"Amédée, no man living could win a woman's love in any such a way as that. Renunciation is no part for a man to play. It warms our pity; but it chills our love."

His face clouded again, and he took a swift turn up and down the room. Then he came back to the window and stood for long looking down into the gray Cathedral close. When he spoke at last, his accent was indescribably sad and pleading.

"What is it then, Arline?" he asked. "Something is drawing us apart. Is it that I demand too much of you?"

She faced him.

"No," she said, with a sort of breathless vehemence. "No; not half enough." Then, turning abruptly, she left him standing there alone.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I HAVE come on a mission," Jimmy observed, as he took off his coat and flung it over a chair.

Without stirring otherwise, Stanwood Tyler took his pipe from between his teeth.

"Good Lord! You!"

"Change the accent, and it will sound more complimentary," Jimmy admonished him. "Your tone is melodious, Tyler."

"Yes, I've a sort of a cold," Stanwood admitted grudgingly, though his voice suggested the first frog of the springtime.

"So your sister said. Therein lies the mission, and you are the heathen I've come to visit. Suppose this seat will bear?" And Jimmy lowered his long figure into a fragile chair of gilded wood and straw, then, alarmed at its creaking, he rose hastily and pushed it to one side. "Infernal things, those!" he said blandly. "Why will a woman always have one round in the way? No fellow can talk coherently, when he expects the next minute to land him sprawling on the rug."

His host laughed unfeelingly.

"Missionaries are expected to put up with a bad time of it. Did you say Patience sent you?"

Abolishing the flimsy seat to a corner, Jimmy rolled up a substantial oaken chair and settled himself before the fire.

"Not exactly sent me, you know," he responded, when he was arranged to his liking. "She merely implied that you

would be glad to see me. Said she was going sliding with Sir Morris, out at the Falls, and that you were shut up with a cold and needed entertainment. I suggested that Sir Morris was better at entertaining than I am, and that anybody could steer a sled; but she stood to her first arrangement."

Stanwood Tyler lifted his hand protestingly.

"Save my feelings, Jimmy," he begged.

Jimmy laughed. Then he fell to prodding the fire.

"Hang your feelings, Tyler, and save your sister!" he retorted. "I am willing to bet that that fellow can't steer a toboggan, much less a sled. He'll probably upset her and break her arm and skin his own nose. Meanwhile, let's gossip."

"What about?"

"Oh, anything you say: Molly, Arline, Leleu's election, St. Just's getting his grip on the editorial pen, the stampeding Vice Royalty —"

"What was that?" Stanwood queried, as he refilled his pipe from the curved palm of his left hand.

"Weren't you there? It was just as they came into Du Fort Street. Some Johnny threw a lighted squib in among the horses of the Vice Royal equipage. They tried to climb a telephone pole and, while they were climbing, another squib reminded the horses of some of the guard that it was etiquette for them to assist. Result: broken straps, broken second commandment, and general chaos."

Stanwood looked up from above his matchsafe.

"Political manoeuvre?" he inquired tersely.

"Not this time; only mere alcoholic merrymaking. It came near being something worse, though. What did you think? A new Guy Fawkes?"

His companion shook his head.

"No; only the old St. Just."

"Oh, I say!" Jimmy remonstrated. "That's slander. I merely proposed to gossip."

Between his stertorious puffings, Stanwood spoke with obvious effort for epigram.

"Slander presupposes some increment of villainy."

"Good words, only they don't mean anything," Jimmy commented. "Who increments, you or St. Just?"

"He could n't," Stanwood responded briefly.

"Don't be too sure. He's young yet. But what do you suppose was his game in helping on Leleu's election? Even Aucune says Leleu never could have made it, without the help of the *Cartier*."

Stanwood wrinkled his brows.

"The motive was bound to be there. The only trouble is that we can't find it. St. Just never acts on impulse."

"Still," Jimmy suggested; "you know he was a friend of Leleu in Paris."

"Nor on sentiment," Stanwood growled, without troubling himself to open his teeth.

"Then you think?" Jimmy said interrogatively.

For a moment, Stanwood chewed savagely at the stem of his pipe. Then he took the bowl of his pipe in the hollow of his hand and used the stem to point his words.

"To use the phraseology of our national game of cards," he remarked thoughtfully; "St. Just is filling his hand to a knave high. He may get four of a kind; he may end up with a bobtail flush. In any case, he is going to bluff till the last minute and avoid a showdown if he can. He's playing a shrewd game and a careful one; but it may all go up in smoke."

Jimmy pondered.

"Perhaps. He is getting some strong cards, though. It's not the weakest of them, his having control of the paper just now."

"It's not the weakest of them, these charges against

the government," Stanwood Tyler retorted. "Those two senators have played straight into St. Just's hand. Without some sort of a crisis, the paper would have been of no use to him. Its line of policy has never swerved. Under any ordinary conditions, St. Just is too sane a man to tamper with it. As it is, no past policy can hold good in this present crisis. He is bound to take some sort of a new ground in this matter, and he stands or falls, according to the side on which he chooses his ground."

Then, of a sudden, Jimmy had recourse to the vernacular of his schoolboy days.

"Unless he straddles," he suggested tersely.

And, meanwhile, the subject of their talk was seated beside the tea table of Mrs. Brooke Lord.

"You were going out?" he had questioned, as she came into the room to greet him.

"Not until later," she reassured him.

With swift dexterity, he drew forward a chair for her, divining as by instinct which was her favourite seat, which the warmest corner of the hearth. Mrs. Brooke Lord smiled a little, however, as she noted the anxious care he bestowed upon placing the chair with its back to the light. Thirty-five and with a sprinkling of premature gray in her dark hair, she yet saw no need of seeking to disguise the ravages of time.

"I knew it was not your day at home," St. Just said, when they were both seated. "However, I ventured to come, this afternoon. My time is not wholly my own now."

Jimmy, had he been there, would have been swift to challenge the statement. Never, to his mind, had St. Just's time been more absolutely his own than since his chief had been ordered south. And not only his time was his own, but his paper as well. Mrs. Brooke Lord, however, inclined to a more sympathetic view of things.

"I know," she assented. "You must be very busy, especially at a time like this, when everything is in such turmoil. This new year is beginning a most exciting chapter."

St. Just looked up alertly.

"Ah! Then you follow it, too?"

"Why not? I am a Conservative, you know, and nowadays we Conservatives have nothing to do but to follow it up."

"But I too am a Conservative," he reminded her; "and I have much to do."

"For your paper? Yes. But what do you think will be the outcome of it all?"

St. Just shrugged his shoulders. He had no intention of wasting his powder on a random shot.

"I think with your husband and with the other men of our party."

The powder was not wasted.

"That there must be a change of leader, if the Liberals are to stay in power?" Mrs. Brooke Lord asked.

St. Just lowered his eyes, lest they betray his satisfaction. For a month, now, he had been too busy in watching the manœuvring of the Liberal party to pay any great heed to the comments of the other faction. There were those, indeed, even among the Liberals, who declared that St. Just's part in the manœuvres was not entirely limited to that of mere spectator. In the meantime, however, he had rather lost touch with his avowed constituency. Arline's weekly gatherings still continued; but he was shrewd enough to see that the Liberal faction was steadily gaining ground among her guests and that it was only a question of weeks before the few Conservatives vanished altogether. That done, it would be an open question how long Arline's ambition would serve to maintain her interest in her attempted salon. In the meantime, Arline had been of untold assistance to him.

Urged on by her apparent interest in his widening political career, Leleu had seen to it that their rooms, each Monday night, were filled with the best of the younger men of his own party. Under the influence of their gracious, smiling hostess and of the refreshment which she gave them, each man not only told his creed, but he told it well. Arline's ambition was greedy; but she was no dunce. She was quick to learn that these men, men whose words were quoted in office corridors and on the corners of streets, were giving her of their intellectual best. She also was quick to learn that their intellectual best, albeit set forth in Gallic phrase, was in no way second to the talk she had been wont to hear over the teacups of Mrs. Brooke Lord. And Mrs. Brooke Lord's gift was a mere inheritance; her own she herself had won. Of course, Leleu had helped her at the start; but he would have been powerless to go on alone. And St. Just himself had helped her; but Arline preferred not to think of that. Neither did she care to think of some of St. Just's recent editorials, forecasting the future of the provincial parties. Thinking of them, it would have been impossible for her to have disregarded the sources of his inspiration. Rather than that, she chose to dwell upon the obvious social success of her brilliant little receptions.

And now, while St. Just, with infinite tact, was leading Mrs. Brooke Lord into a discussion in which her talk could not fail to reflect the colour of talk about her tea table, Patience and Sir Morris were spending a golden January afternoon on the big slide at Bureau's.

For a week, Sir Morris had been in training for the event. All the previous winter, he had confined himself solely to the toboggan; this year, he had developed aspirations towards one of the wide, clumsy sleds, infinitely less picturesque, infinitely more dangerous in the hands of the novice. On one memorable day, he had suffered himself

to be taken down the slide on the sled of a burly habitant hireling. Till the end of time, he would hold the recollection of the dizzy moment when he balanced, rocking slightly, at the top of that almost perpendicular wall of ice, of the sinking at the pit of his stomach, as he went over the edge, of the breathless sweep downwards, of the smug satisfaction of spinning along, quite uninjured, over the level ice at the foot of the slide. On a toboggan, Sir Morris had felt safe enough. The six inches he was raised above the level of the ice had seemed to multiply to infinity the chances of disaster. Terrified to the core of his big, boyish soul, Sir Morris yet did not funk. The sensation was new. He would proceed to assimilate it.

Morning after morning, he journeyed out to Bureau's. Morning after morning, he was promoted until, from being a mere bit of immovable freight, he had become past master in the art of steering. The terror departed; but the charm remained. Then, when the habitant hireling could teach him nothing more, Sir Morris went in search of Patience.

The train to the Falls was full, that afternoon; but Sir Morris and Patience were quite unaware of the attention of which they were the object. Sir Morris was wholly absorbed in his companion; Patience was like a happy child off for a holiday. For three days, she had been standing guard over a wholly restless semi-invalid. She liked Sir Morris; and, besides, the afternoon was all golden and azure and white, and dazzling withal. She was conscious of a perfect contentment, as she stood with Sir Morris in the rear of the elevator, looking down over the dark mill roofs, out upon the shining, ice-bound river where the long train of sledges, like great black ants in the distance, crawled slowly across the ice-bridge to the Island.

From the seat above and behind them, kindly eyes stared down upon the unconscious pair. All the world

may love a lover ; but the love is never so obvious as when the lover is young and comely and hall-marked with prosperity. Sir Morris, that day, was especially good to look upon. Big and blond and ruddy, he wore the white blanket suit of the snowshoe club, the black-striped scarlet tuque and trunks and mittens, and his brand-new yellow moccasins were marvels of gaudy embroidery. Beside his vivid colour, Patience, in her sealskin coat and hat, looked modest as a soft brown sparrow, save for her glowing face and for the bright scarlet kerchief that showed at the open neck of her coat. And no sparrow, however deceitfully modest of mien, was ever more alert and perky of mood than was Patience Tyler on that January day.

At the suggestion of Sir Morris, they had brought their snowshoes with them. Halting at the top of the elevator just long enough to lash the thongs about their ankles, they had rounded the low white cottage with its flanking guns, crossed the spruce-covered tunnel of the road, crossed the bridge, crossed a field or two, and then turned sharply to the north. On the left was the forest-bordered river ; before them and on their right, the open fields stretched away and up into the heart of the shining mountains ; beneath their feet, the glistening surface of the snow was scarred by no track. The spirit of the Canadian winter, silent, impressive and beautiful, was all about them and, awed by its impressive beauty, they too, aliens both, fell silent in their turn.

For a long while, they kept on steadily, feeling their footing as by instinct, loath as they were to lower their eyes from the picture that encircled them. Then Sir Morris, still without a word, turned westward towards the river, came under the shadow of a grove of sugar maples and, halting there, held up a warning hand. As by magic, the stillness had vanished, and they were surrounded with the busy murmur of the winter forest :

the sighing of the trees, the crackling of the branches in the still, cold air, the faint, distant note of an occasional bird. Then, with a rustle and a rush, a fox shot past them and, with Patience's exclamation, the spell was broken. Laughing and chattering like a pair of merry children, they made the round of the maple grove, pried and peered in at the sugar house, sat down to rest on a snow-heaped log, raced up a steep incline and then, turning, struck into their former trail and went plodding back again to the head of the falls.

They talked much on the way: of the summer, of Sir Morris's cousin in the Police, of Stanwood and Arline and even of Jimmy. Now and then, the replies of Sir Morris came a bit at random; but his clean blue eyes never wavered from Patience's eager face. For the hour, he was weighing the girl as never before, weighing her in the generations-old scales of his race and kin, of his training and tradition, weighing her and in no one essential finding her wanting. And Patience, wholly unconscious of it all, chattered on in blithe content. Her content was for the present hour and for her present companion. With the future it concerned itself not at all.

At the back door of Bureau's, they untied their snow-shoes and shook off the snow which, dust-dry, powdered their clothing to their shoulders. Sir Morris provided himself with a sled and, side by side, they climbed to the top of the nearer slide. Patience was still chattering gayly; but Sir Morris had grown suddenly still. Around them, the chatter and shouts of the other sliders cut through and through the frosty air; but in utter silence Sir Morris awaited his turn, swung his heavy sled into position at the top of the slide and settled Patience firmly on the front of the sled. Then he took his place behind her, half reclining, his right arm grasping the sled

far forward at her side, and his head stuck through the curve of her encircling left arm.

"Ready?" he asked tersely.

She nodded.

The next instant, they were holding their breath, as the sled dropped over the face of the slide, went tearing down the dazzling ice-wall and then glided smoothly away towards the foot of the distant opposite slide.

Sir Morris never spoke, until the sled was slowing down to an almost imperceptible pace. Then he gave a sigh of absolute relief.

"Oh, I say," he blurted out abruptly; "don't you wish we could always go on like this, through life, I mean?"

And Patience, although she realized all the repressed fervour of his words, nevertheless could not refrain from glancing down at her own huddled figure, at her short skirt blown aside from her shabby yellow moccasins, and at the head of Sir Morris with its scarlet cheeks and wind-ruffled hair, sticking out from the encircling curve of her throttling arm. She looked, and then, quite involuntarily and to her own everlasting remorse, she burst into a peal of laughter.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“AMÉDÉE?”

Leleu glanced up at his wife with the little smile which so rarely failed to answer to her voice.

“You wish?” he queried.

Above her rich sable collar, her face was bright and winning, an indescribable cajolery was in her tone.

“Is it granted?” she asked banteringly.

Leleu’s smile broke into a laugh.

“As soon as asked,” he responded.

“Truly?” she urged, as her golden-brown brows went upward and the eyes beneath them showed a little gleam in their dark blue depths.

Regardless of the little crowd on the terrace, Leleu turned and swept her from head to heel with his loving, eager gaze.

“Do I ever refuse you, when you speak in that voice?” he asked her then.

“Not often. Not as often as you should.” The caressing cadence was still there. “It is good to be spoiled, Amédée. And now —”

“Now I spoil you?” he inquired, in affectionate mockery. “Well, why not, since we both enjoy it?”

She laughed again, as she drew a bit closer to his side. After all, there was a certain pleasure in a Sunday noon stroll on the sunshiny terrace, even though her husband’s coat still carried in its folds a faint, sweet smell of incense, left there during the Sunday morning mass in the gray old Basilica whither she never once had followed him. Arline,

herself, as if to prove that her Catholic marriage had changed no whit of her own attitude to things spiritual, was scrupulously careful and regular in her seat on the middle aisle of the Cathedral. Leleu was always awaiting her outside the door, when her service was ended. In the early days of their married life, Arline had met him with a certain constraint. Later, a slight flavour of patronage had mingled itself with the constraint; but, during the past few weeks, both patronage and constraint had vanished. In their place had sprung up a little sense of gratified ambition, as she watched the growing cordiality of the salutes vouchsafed to her husband. Leleu's election at 'Tête Joli had won out by a narrow majority, and it was open talk that only by the support of a strong Conservative influence such as that of the *Cartier*, could he have won out at all. Nevertheless, in the light of the hitherto unchanging Conservatism of the Tête Joli electors, even his small majority and his *Cartier* support had been accepted as proof of the general theory that Amédée Leleu was a man worth watching. Whatever the cause, however, the fact remained that Leleu was to take his seat on the Liberal side of the house, in early February, and that, meanwhile, Arline was finding an added pleasure in her Sunday noon walk on the terrace at his side, even though his Sunday coat did bear evidences of having been worn inside the doors of the Basilica.

"If you wish to know the theological tenets of any woman here, just sniff at her furs," Patience had said, at the end of her first winter, and Patience's method would not have led her too far amiss.

Arline, however, went one point beyond. As a rule, she saw to it that Leleu should leave his fur-lined coat behind him, when he went to church on Sunday morning.

He had put it on again, that noon, however, when he had started for the terrace, and Arline, as she had met

him outside the Cathedral door, had been conscious of a certain satisfaction in the fact that, quite obviously, her husband was the most attractive man of the groups lined up at either end of the steps. The long, straight lines of his coat added apparent inches to his height; the silvery sheen of the unplucked otter lining, rolling back over a wide collar, showed the healthy tint of his dark cheeks and gave a deeper lustre to his eyes. Handsome he was not; but, what counts far more than beauty in a man, he was alert, ascetic and well-bred. His lips shut closely and were thin. His ears had distinct lobes.

At Leleu's last words, Arline's face flushed with pleasure, as she drew a step nearer to his side.

"Why not spoil me?" she echoed. "And yet, I am not sure how good it is for me. Some day, you may repent it." Then, without pausing in her walk, she faced him suddenly. "Amédée, are you glad?" she asked.

He needed no explanation of her words.

"Very."

"Always?" she persisted.

The blood rolled up across his cheeks; but his eyes never wavered.

"Yes, so long as I know you are happy."

For a moment, her eyes rested on him thoughtfully. Then they dropped to the Levis shore.

"Amédée," she said slowly; "I think I am as happy as I ever could be. The best of me is happy now; the worst of me can never know what happiness is. I told you so once before, told you I seemed to myself like two different women, at war with each other and one of them at war with all the world. And yet —"

"You too are glad?" he questioned eagerly.

"Yes," she answered thoughtfully. "Yes. Of course, we both are conscious of certain barriers between us."

"But they will fall in time," he urged.

However, she faced him steadily.

"Never," she said, with unwonted gravity. "Rather, they will rise still higher as the years go on."

Anxiously his eyes searched her face.

"I do not see why ; but perhaps I do not fully understand your point of view," he said, and his accent was hesitating.

She glanced up for an instant at the scarlet spot fluttering over the round gray bastion above their heads. Then, turning sharply, she looked out through the narrow gorge of Des Carrières Street to the gray Basilica which blocked the sky-line at the end. Her reply came a bit drearily.

"No, Amédée ; I am afraid that you do not." Then she moved back again down the terrace and into the heart of the throng.

For a time, they both were busy, answering to the greetings which met them on every hand. The crowd was thickening, for it was one of the soft, still days which come now and then, even in the heart of winter, to remind us that the sun has not entirely forsaken its ice-locked planet. Above the King's Bastion, the flag fluttered bravely ; but, down on the terrace, scarcely a breath of wind cut across the sunshiny air. The snow rang crisply beneath their feet ; but the terrace and the leafless gardens and the old gray citadel above were warm with the golden light of the winter noonday.

Throughout the length of the terrace, Arline made no effort to resume her talk with her husband. At the lower end, however, they halted for a moment to look out over the Laval spires to the glistening stretches of country beyond. Then Leleu asked, —

"Shall we take one more turn, Arline?"

"Yes, we've time enough. Besides, I want to talk to you. My question is not asked yet ; your promise is n't given."

"But promised," he reminded her.

"Perhaps. Still, it's not the same thing. A promised promise leaves two margins for doubt."

The smile left his lips, and he looked at her with some uneasiness. It was plain that she was only parrying, in order to gain time; and his experience of Arline had taught him that, with her, such a course was not of goodly omen. Upon her own side, Arline had learned some lessons during the past seven months. One of the lessons was that Leleu's strongholds could rarely be taken by direct assault. Her husband's temperament, together with the nature of her own desires, was fast turning Arline Leleu into a strategist of no mean skill.

"But what is the question?" he inquired, after a pause.

Arline's right hand, muff and all, dropped to her side. Her left hand, stealing through the curve of his arm, buried itself in the thick, soft fur of his deep cuff.

"You know this dinner of Molly's?" she asked, stifling a little yawn, as if the very mention of her sister-in-law's hospitality rendered her drowsy.

Inasmuch as they were due there inside of an hour, Leleu did know it. He merely nodded. Then, —

"What of it?" he asked.

Arline laughed.

"Poor dear old Molly! She has such a courageous way of doing up these family functions. No matter how the last one drags, she is always bound to try it again. I wonder why it is that Sunday noon should be sacred to the god of domestic boredom."

"But the others will be there, to-day."

Arline made a little grimace.

"Yes; but Stanwood is so heavy. I believe that Americans, when they are dull, are the most ponderous nation in the world. They lack the touch, the *verve* of

the French." She laughed again. "Tell me, Amédée, did you ever expect to hear me speak a good word for your nation?"

Gently he brushed aside her trivial jest.

"Yes, when you came to know us better," he answered, with a gravity for which he himself was quite at a loss to account.

For an instant, a group of vertical wrinkles gathered between her brows. Then she laughed once more; but into the laugh there came the edge he dreaded.

"How seriously you take my little compliment, Amédée! Really, you are almost as bad as Stanwood Tyler. Sir Morris is to be there, too, and Monsieur St. Just. It is quite a family reunion."

"St. Just is not of the family," Leleu objected swiftly.

"Not really. Still, you were old friends in Paris."

"Acquaintances, and long years ago," he replied, with crisp brevity.

"And acquaintances now. After all, it is rather nice of Molly to include him for you."

"Mrs. Brooke Lord need not have troubled herself."

"But I suppose Molly felt that it would be pleasant for you to have another man of your own race," Arline reminded him.

"He is not of my race."

"You both are French."

"He is of Paris, I of Canada. The wide ocean rolls between," Leleu made terse answer.

Arline smiled.

"But you both have crossed the ocean," she said, with the more plastic speech she had learned during even her one winter of association with the race whose diction outranks the whole rest of the world.

"Only for our own passing gain."

Arline recurred to her former ground.

"But Monsieur St. Just often tells me of your being together in Paris."

"Yes."

"And you see him often here."

"Yes."

"And yet you dislike him."

Gravely he shook his head.

"I fear him more."

For an instant, her tone rang hard and cold as the ice beneath her heel.

"Fear? You, Amédée?"

"Yes," he made deliberate answer; "as I fear the snake that strikes in the dark."

Arline drew in her breath and opened her lips to reply. Then she had the consummate tact to leave the question unargued. Instead, she nestled her gloved fingers still deeper into the long, silver-tipped fur of his cuff.

"What is it that you French say?" she asked gayly. "Let us go back to our muttons'? How appropriate that is, for one always has roast lamb at a family dinner on Sunday noon! But about the dinner, Amédée, those men are bound to talk politics."

"What then?"

"Nothing; only you are the only Liberal."

"What then?" he repeated.

"They will be sure to ask which side you mean to take."

Purposely he misunderstood her meaning.

"But they know that I am of the Liberals."

"Yes, of course. But in this party split."

"Split? I do not understand."

"This division," she urged.

"But there is no division."

"But there is. Everyone says so."

"Who then?" he asked.

"Monsieur St. Just, for one."

"St. Just would make a division where none exists."

"But all the papers say so. I read them all," she insisted.

And Leleu made quiet answer, —

"And I, I know the men."

Letting go his cuff, she clasped her hands together in the middle of her muff; but her lips were still smiling.

"So be it, Amédée. I must be convinced, I suppose. But, if there were a split, where should you take your stand?"

He looked at her gravely, as if considering his words.

"Upon the side of the Government," he said then.

This time, her petulance refused to be repressed.

"Oh, Amédée, how foolish! No. You'd never cling to that worn-out faction! It is an open target for every sort of slander."

"What matter, so long as it is only slander?" he asked her.

"But how do you know it is?"

"I know nothing. I merely think. Much remains to be proved. In the meantime, the support of the government at Ottawa counts for much; and —"

"And?" she echoed impatiently.

"And my county counts for more."

"I don't see what you mean," she said, with increased impatience.

Leleu bit his lip. Then, of a sudden, his mobile face grew stern, and new lines shaped themselves about his brows.

"This, and this only, Arline," he answered steadily.

"I stood for Tête Joli, to represent it in the name of the Liberal Government. That Government then was a matter of no question. My election was then, not now. Whatever the question now, my duty is to keep the faith

in which I was elected. So long as I am not recalled to receive other instructions, no other course is open to me."

"Oh, Amédée!" Then she controlled herself. "Then you cling to a worn-out issue, a doubtful leader?"

"I do."

"You admit that it is worn-out?" she demanded hotly, for the quiet steadiness of his tone was breaking down her resolve to hold herself calm.

"I admit nothing. It is a question for proof."

"I should think it was," she sneered.

But Leleu checked her with a glance.

"One rarely stops to accuse a petty man," he said quietly.

"But greatness does n't always imply virtue," she retorted. "Still, whatever the outcome, you will find that the best men of your party will reorganize on a new basis."

"Perhaps."

"And you should be among them," she urged more gently, for her cooling anger showed her that his will was as adamant. Shatter it she could not; she could only hope to undermine. "Think of it, Amédée! You are just at the beginning of your whole political career; things are stormy, the waves are getting higher." Purposely she was throwing herself into the metaphors in which he took such keen delight. "If you choose your wave with care, as you launch, it can wash you high and higher into lasting safety. Many say that your ship is unfit for the sea; even you admit the doubt. Then why cling to it, when you run the risk of being dragged down in its wake."

His answer was short.

"Because I have given my allegiance to the captain."

"But even the rats leave a sinking ship," she urged again.

Far back at the corners of Leleu's lips, there came the

beginnings of his little smile; but the smile showed no hint of mirth, and his dark eyes, fixed upon the Levis heights, were intent as the eyes of a seer, as he made reply, —

“The rats, yes. But the mate stands by his captain on the bridge.” Then, turning abruptly, he pointed to the gray shaft, rising among the leafless trees in the Governor’s Garden. “Not all the honour is contained in the victory,” he added. “But come, Arline, it is time we were at your sister’s.”

Arline sat next St. Just at dinner, and again and again St. Just rallied her upon her absent mood. The fact was that her encounter with her husband had left her thoughtful. Regret his decision as she would and did, she yet could not fail to see that it arose from an innate loyalty to the tenets of the party which had put him into his seat. He had been elected, not to attack the existing Government, but to support it. His conscience was wholly logical, rather admirable. Nevertheless, she objected entirely to its logical outcome. Under the specious arguments of St. Just, she had reached the belief that the present crack in the Liberal ranks, a crack which soon would doubtless widen into an impassable breach, would in time lead to a union of the dissenting Liberals with the more progressive spirits of the old Conservative party. All that was needed to assure this end was a tireless, fearless leader, and St. Just himself had suggested to Arline the fitness of Leleu to usurp that leadership. St. Just had studied with care his own moves in the present game. Arline was his own friend; Arline’s influence upon Leleu would be solely upon the side of a policy which in time would unite her husband with the men of her own social set. As for St. Just, a crisis would be all for him. For the hour, the *Cartier* was in his hands and launched on a trackless sea. It was for him to choose the port in which he should at last cast anchor.

Meanwhile, what harm if he should hoist a pirate flag? The flag could be lowered again, as soon as a fixed power should once more come in sight. What that power would be, St. Just as yet confessed himself unable to judge. All he could do, was to hold himself ready for any alliance and, in the meantime, to prove to the world at large that his pirate craft carried guns of unerring aim. Guns, though, counted only in a time of war. His first and obvious duty was to increase the disruption at any cost.

As the dinner neared its end, Arline roused herself and turned to St. Just.

"I have just been having a long discussion with my husband," she said, with a careless smile.

"Did you convince him?" St. Just asked negligently, for the eye of Stanwood Tyler, resting upon them both, rendered him a bit uneasy.

"Oh, no." She laughed a little. "We only reached a — what is it you call it? A deadlock?"

An hour later, St. Just put her into her coat.

"You will be at home, this afternoon?" he asked, too low for the rest to hear his words.

The next night, half the city was discussing the latest utterance of the *Cartier*. Trenchant, witty, full of innuendo and of reference to a year-old speech by the Chief of the Opposition, and of half-veiled prophecy of excitements yet to come, it hung itself upon a pithy title phrase: *From the Lips of a Loyal Liberal*.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

JIMMY, crossing the Esplanade with Sir Morris, cast a reflective glance after St. Just.

"Curious thing," he observed; "that a fellow with a perpetual grievance can look so content with things!"

Sir Morris laughed.

"Content with things, or content with himself?" he queried.

"By Jove, that's it!" Jimmy assented, in obvious satisfaction with the distinction made by his friend. "Moreover, if you care to go on splitting hairs, you might say that his content is wholly personal, and his grievance is a mere bit of professional pose."

Sir Morris turned up the collar of his coat, as they came out under the Kent Gate and faced the chilly blast sweeping down across the open spaces around the Parliament Buildings.

"What is his grievance, anyway?" he queried.

"What is n't?" Jimmy rejoined promptly. "It's everything. Sometimes it is that Spencer Wood entertains more Englishmen than French; sometimes it is that the French translation of the report of an English committee gets delayed in the printers' hands. Yesterday, it was a Liberal senator who stands out against the Government; to-day, it is that same senator who goes into the cabinet. Sometimes it is a colonial matter, sometimes an imperial. Do you know, I should pity his wife, if he ever married. He's the sort of fellow who would be late to breakfast, and then curse the cook because the muffins were too brown."

"He'll never marry," Sir Morris predicted oracularly.

"Why not?"

"He'd never think any woman was worth the compliment he'd pay her by asking her."

"You never can reckon on St. Just," Jimmy retorted. Then he gasped, as the gale swept down upon them. "Oh, I say, this is awful! Let's get back to the Grande Allée." And, taking advantage of the first opening in the low gray curb which surrounds the Parliament Buildings, he struck into a path which led them directly past the main entrance steps.

Just as they reached the side of the building, Sir Morris looked up at a group of men who had pulled open the door and come out on the steps. Leleu was among them; but he gave no sign of recognition of his passing friends. Instead of that, eager-eyed and with a scarlet spot in either cheek, he was wholly engrossed in the talk which ran from man to man of the group, talk excited, insistent and wholly lacking in the alternating phrase of conversation. Jimmy, meanwhile, had descried a boy, laden with afternoon papers, standing at the foot of the ring in front of the main entrance. Heedless of the group on the steps, he held up a warning finger to the boy and whistled. The next instant, the youngster was by his side, his ink-damp papers spread invitingly over his arm.

"Which will you have, Sir Morris?" Jimmy inquired, as he felt in his pockets for a coin.

"The one with the tallest headlines," Sir Morris answered promptly.

Jimmy laughed.

"Take your pick, then. The *Cartier* seems to fill your ideal. Oh, by Jove!"

"What now?" Sir Morris queried, for Jimmy's gloved hands had shut on the flimsy sheet with a vigour which

suggested that it would be long before his companion gained sight of the page.

Jimmy read the headlines, ran his eye down the first column and up to the top of the next. Then he looked up. His eyes alone betrayed his excitement; his voice was as jovial as ever.

"According to the *Cartier*, there'll be the devil to pay."

"When?"

"Within two days."

"What?"

"Three ministers are ready to resign."

Sir Morris gasped.

"But there has been no division."

"No."

"And the session does n't open for a few days yet."

"No."

"Then what does it mean?"

Jimmy folded the paper into a square bundle, then crushed the bundle into his overcoat pocket.

"That they're blithering cowards, and don't dare start a vote of non-confidence," he said sharply.

Sir Morris eyed him over the top of their two fur collars.

"Then you think?" he asked again.

"That they are determined to cripple the Government; that they can do it with least risk to themselves, if they send in their resignations too late to leave time for their places to be filled. The very suddenness of the attack is enough to shake the strongest power."

"Hm! I begin to see," Sir Morris made thoughtful comment. "In fact, the whole thing is a bolt from the blue."

But, even in this crisis, Jimmy's humour was dominant.

"No," he objected. "It's a bolt from the red."

For a moment, Sir Morris grappled with the joke. Then he gave it up and passed on to the main question.

"What makes you think it is true?" he asked.

Jimmy's mind swept backward over the past week.

"Because I know it," he replied curtly. Then he forced himself to put away his anxious frown. "Beg pardon, old man. I didn't mean to take your ears off; but — Oh, I say, are you good for a long walk?"

"We were going to call on Mrs. Laurie," Sir Morris reminded him dubiously.

"Hang Mrs. Laurie! I've got to walk this thing out, talk it out, too, for the matter of that, though it's not a pretty subject." And Sir Morris heard the paper in Jimmy's pocket crackle beneath his clutching hand as, heedless now of the biting wind, they swung into the Grande Allée and faced westward.

In perfect silence, but with an energy that was more eloquent than words, Jimmy tramped onward until they were between the ancient battle lines. Suddenly he spoke.

"Damn St. Just!" he said.

Sir Morris laughed.

"Have you frozen my nose in your confounded gale, just for the sake of remarking that under the eaves of the Franciscan nuns?" he inquired amicably. "If so, next time you'd best telephone."

But Jimmy disregarded the protest, albeit his hands were busy rubbing his own whitening ears. His next words, however, were disjointed.

"I've known Arline for several years. She's no fool; neither is she all knave. What the deuce do you suppose her game is?"

This time, Sir Morris faced about and stared at his friend in open astonishment. Jimmy laughed, as he met the wide blue eyes; but his laugh was not too good to hear.

"No ; I'm not going off my head, old man. Neither am I ignorant that one does n't usually turn one's family skeletons into jumping-jacks for the edification of one's friends. Just now, it's talk to you, or lose my head and say things to St. Just that will make matters ten thousand times worse."

Sir Morris laughed shortly.

"Best talk to me, then. I've a confounded bad memory."

"Thanks," Jimmy replied laconically. "It may be just as well. The best safety valve should n't have any escapement, as Tyler would put it." Then he faced forward and walked on, with his eyes fixed upon the distant perspective of the roadway ahead of him. "The fact is," his words now were coming with obvious difficulty ; "the fact is, my own family are mixed up in this thing more than I like to admit."

"In the bolt ?"

"No ; I wish they were, and had bolted, too," Jimmy said, in a swift wave of impatience. "Mixed up, I mean, in St. Just's getting hold of it."

"Get hold !" Sir Morris echoed. "That fellow could catch the ghost of a greased pig. Nothing escapes him, nothing."

"Perhaps not," Jimmy replied moodily. "This time, though, the pig cuddled down and went to sleep in his lap. Have you been at any of Arline's receptions ?"

"One."

"And that was probably enough," Jimmy commented shrewdly. "It would have been for me, only I began to get curious to see what was in the wind. At first, it seemed natural enough for her to ask Leleu's friends and her own and even Molly's. She naturally wanted to have some sort of social life, and I thought she was rather decent to take in the French set, after she'd made such a

row about meeting it in the first place. I must say, she did it nicely, too. The Lord made her a beauty; when she wants to, she can make herself charming. Moreover, her punchbowl was unusual, even for Quebec, and we aren't exactly what you'd call a prohibition city."

But Sir Morris's mind was floundering along far in the rear of Jimmy's none too obvious logic.

"But what does all that have to do with to-day?" he asked.

Patiently Jimmy waited for him to catch up.

"That was at first," he explained then. "Now for last time. The change has been gradual, but steady. First Molly's friends dropped out. Then the ones Arline counted as her own. That cleared out all the Conservative set but St. Just. Of course, Brooke and I went, now and then; but we're no politicians, and did n't count. As for the other fellows, as far as the talk went, one did n't miss them. They'd been out of the game since November, and only served the turn of Greek chorus, just a lot of frogs croaking over the approaching ruin of the Liberal party."

"But why ruin?" Sir Morris objected suddenly. "The game has been all in their hands."

Jimmy laughed.

"Remember your *Æsop*, how one frog swelled and swelled till he split himself? And I suppose all the other little frogs sat in a ring on the edge of the puddle and said 'I told you so.' But about Arline. For a month, now, she has had nobody but a mob of Liberals, all talking their own views, and one Conservative who has been all ears and inkpot, and no tongue."

"St. Just?" Sir Morris asked, as light began to dawn.

"St. Just. Of course, with all this buzz about the senatorial accusations, the talk grew more and more exciting. St. Just held his tongue, filled his ears and then emptied

his inkpot. All last week, things were in the air. Sunday afternoon, I dropped in while Leleu was at Benedictions. I've been doing it, lately. St. Just was there, and I came in on him explaining to Arline—what do you suppose?"

"More politics, of course," Sir Morris answered promptly.

"That's where you are dead wrong. He was telling her how Madame the Comtesse of Something or Other used to brew her punch, and offering to mix it for Arline's reception, next night."

Sir Morris nodded.

"I see the trick, by Jove! And then he did n't take any, himself."

"That's where you are wrong again. He drank with the rest of them; but he is immune. It was a curious concoction. Nobody was absolutely drunk; but everybody was garrulous and cocksure of his own scheme to save the province."

"Cordial?" Sir Morris queried.

"Nothing so deadly."

"Where was Leleu?"

The animation left Jimmy's face, and his sigh had a tired sound.

"Everywhere at once. He knew his friends were making fools of themselves. It just was n't bad enough to give him an excuse for clearing the house. Arline was in her glory. She had no idea what was going on in the other room; she merely thought the evening was a grand success."

"And St. Just?"

"Everywhere that Leleu was n't. He raked up the embers as fast as Leleu scattered them."

Sir Morris squared his shoulders and lifted his honest face against the wind.

"Why does n't Leleu kick him out?" he demanded, in hot wrath.

"The fellow that kicks at a cur gets his heel nipped," Jimmy made trenchant answer.

"Let him nip. It's uncomfortable, but not dangerous."

Jimmy's answering words came with a little groan.

"That's where Brooke comes in."

"Mr. Brooke Lord?" Sir Morris demanded incredulously.

"Yes. The story is longer than you think," Jimmy made dreary answer. "Of course, you know it is open talk that the *Cartier* is growing less Conservative, every day of its life, publishing Liberal letters and all that. Well, have you noticed in the papers any references to its claim of an agreement made long ago between a prominent Liberal and a rich Conservative?"

Sir Morris shook his head.

"I'm such a duffer at politics, you know," he said rather apologetically.

"No duffer. It's only that it has missed your eye. I'm thankful if there's one person in the city who hasn't seen and wondered about the *Cartier's* hints. Every page bristles with them, and they are growing more ominous. Now the gist of the matter is—" Jimmy paused.

"Is what?"

"That, three years ago, Leleu and St. Just and Brooke crossed on the same steamer. They were together a good deal and, naturally, talked politics by the hour. St. Just claimed to be ignorant, and asked any number of questions. Brooke and Leleu answered them. Brooke told how his business was falling off under the Liberal policy, how much it would be worth to him, if they could only see his side of the case a little more clearly. Leleu listened, admitted the justice of his claims, and then they both slid off into a wholly impersonal discussion of political bribery."

"Oh," Sir Morris said slowly. "Hercules built out of a shoemaker's last."

And Jimmy made moody reply, —

"Yes, and neither shoemaker can deny his share in making the last. Then, of course, fate took a hand, married Arline to Leleu, and the rest is a natural sequence, up to the secret of the bolt floating out in the bowl of punch. St. Just is playing a shrewd game; but he is only just beginning to show his hand. If Leleu interferes in the least with the game, St. Just will demand a showdown and, what cards he lacks from the pack, he will produce in duplicate from up his sleeve."

Sir Morris shut his teeth together. When at last he opened them, —

"And what is the conclusion of the whole matter?" he asked.

Jimmy's reply was terse.

"Damnation." Then he added abruptly, "Let's go back to the Tylers' and see if Stanwood has heard the news."

Nevertheless, both men, as they turned their backs to the wind, were fully aware that it was more than an hour before Stanwood was due at his home.

Patience met them cordially. She read the trouble in their faces, and she was tactful enough to make neither comment nor question. Instead, she poked the fire to a blaze, lighted the alcohol lamps beneath her tea kettle and her chafing dish, and announced her intention of a substantial feast, even at that unorthodox hour of the day. It was obvious that her guests were tired, cold and worried. As hostess, it was her part to see that they were warmed and fed.

An hour later, Stanwood found them in animated discussion of the prospects for early golf. Patience was wise in her generation. Had either of her guests appeared to

her alone, she would have lent a sympathetic ear to the tale of his woes. Confidences, however, she felt, should never take the form of a duet, nor yet of a fugue. And so it chanced that it was Stanwood who brought to her the first news of the rumoured crisis. After one glance at Jimmy's face, she took it quite as a matter of no importance, laughed at Stanwood for his credulity, laughed about St. Just for his hot-headed readiness to magnify trifles. Nevertheless, while her lips laughed, her eyes were grave. She too had lately formed the habit of dropping in upon Arline at the hour for Benedictions. Like Jimmy, she had been there, only the Sunday before.

Alone of them all, Stanwood Tyler had an impersonal appreciation of the gravity of the impending crisis. The rumour he was ready to accept as a fact. The months-long discontent with the existing order of things, increased by the passive revolt of the Conservative party and aided by their active influence, was ending, as they had hoped, in the temporary disruption of the Liberal power. Ever since the provincial elections in late November, it had been check and counter, check and check again, until the independent Liberals were ready to deliver their final mate. Ethically dubious, the move had yet been cleverly planned. No government could fail to be crippled by the resignation of half its cabinet, on the very eve of the coming together of the house. Only a miracle could prevent its downfall and the consequent rising of a new power close beside the foundations of the old. And the aspirants for that new power chose to discount the possibility of a miracle, and, at the same time, they showed themselves wholly regardless of the commercial paralysis which the threatened crisis could not fail to bring upon the province.

Pipe in hand, Stanwood argued the question from every viewpoint and entirely to his own satisfaction. Sir Morris

lent him profound attention, and Jimmy scowled and prodded the fire. At length, he turned to Patience, seated at his elbow.

"I'm going now," he said abruptly. "May I come back, to-morrow morning, to talk to you?"

"About the thunderbolt?" she asked, with forced lightness.

His voice sank even lower, and the words came reluctantly.

"No; about — Arline."

Patience threw off her mask of lightness, and faced him with a smile that was gentle, womanly, pitiful.

"I know what you mean," she answered. "We both of us think things; we both of us would like to talk about them. Still — do you think it would be quite wise? After all, Arline is your sister; and, by and by, we both might be sorry we had spoken." Then, as Jimmy flushed a little and rose to his feet, she also rose and stood looking at him with anxious, kindly eyes. "Don't think I misunderstand," she added; "and please don't misunderstand me. It's not that I don't care, you know; it's only that I am a little bit — afraid."

And Jimmy bowed, and went away. As he went, however, he felt relieved of at least a share of the weight which had fallen upon him when he had crossed the park before the Parliament Buildings. He had looked into Patience's steady eyes and read there the truth, that she shared his anxiety and, sharing, let herself come even closer to the secret places of his life.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A WEEK or two afterwards, the province and the city were stretched on the rack of a political crisis, Leleu of a domestic one, Sir Morris Plante of a crisis of the heart. Nevertheless, to the outward eye, social life was going on its usual gay routine, a bit more gay, that year, than was ordinary, partly because of the unwonted length of a season which lasted into March, partly because the general atmosphere of feverish excitement extended even to the purely feminine and social. Whatever the next day might bring forth, even to the decapitation of the political head, society was bound to dine and to dance. True, the emergency developed an entirely new form of social activity upon the part of the successful hostess who, smiling and nonchalant as ever, yet kept a watchful eye upon the aides whom she had detailed to break up the diminutive caucuses which were sure to form themselves, wherever two or three men of the same faction found themselves unnoticed in a corner.

The march of political events had gone at the double quick, that winter. Viewed in the light of the past month, the weeks preceding the general elections seemed tame and empty of excitement. Hard on the heels of the general elections had come the provincial dissolution and the consequent withdrawal of the Conservatives from the political arena. The Liberals had been returned again, victorious; but, by very lack of a common foe, their party had fallen a prey to internal strife. Accusation had followed accusation, investigations had been demanded, delayed, countermanded. There had been

appeals made to the dominion government; there had been unsought advice received from it. Every political leader appeared to be at war with every other political leader, and, in the multitude of petty wars, motives vanished from sight. Then, just as the session was to open upon a patched-up peace, the rumoured resignation of half the cabinet had gone from rumour to historic fact, and, worst of all, the outgoing faction of the cabinet had stolidly refused to make public the reasons for the resignation. And the Government, shaken and pitifully alone, was facing the crisis with brave and steady eyes.

As a matter of necessity, Spencer Wood had come to the rescue. It was palpably impossible for the cabinet to be filled at a day's notice. Accordingly, the opening of the session was delayed until early March. Meanwhile, the two factions, that of the Government and that of the so-called bolters, faced each other like angry dogs whose teeth are bared, whose hackles have risen. Eye to eye, they measured their strength, while they waited, each for the other to make the first move.

The resignation had scarcely become a fact when, one day, Monsieur Aucune sent a messenger in search of Leleu. The conference which followed, lasted throughout the afternoon. When the two men parted, Monsieur Aucune was serenely content. Leleu, on the other hand, was flushed and eager, unsteady of hand and eye and voice. It was not until he had tramped far out the Sainte Foy Road that he dared return to the Clarendon and face Arline. He had been bidden, for the present at least, to hold his peace. Nevertheless, he was uneasy for his secret. It seemed to him that Arline, seated opposite him at the table, must be able to behold his reflected future, shining back at her from out his dazzled eyes. It was a relief to him when the meal was ended and they could join Jimmy and the Tylers, waiting for them in the hall below.

Tara Hall was full, that night, so full that the managers of the symphony society felt some regret that they had decided against giving their midwinter concert in the Auditorium. The barren little hall was a meagre substitute for the still, green beauty of the larger place; but the audience made good the lack, for Quebec is never half so dainty as in its evening clothes.

It had been Jimmy's doing that the Leleus had been added to their usual quartette. It would be better for Patience to have another woman along, and Sir Morris would see to it that Leleu was not left out in the cold. In fact, Jimmy was coming to the slow realization that Sir Morris generally could be relied upon to do the social duties shirked by other men.

Sir Morris, in these last days, had been watching Patience with doubtful eyes. His manner to her was as friendly as ever; but it was slightly tinged with self-distrust. Sir Morris had never been able to understand the mirth with which Patience had met his eager words, that day on the slide at Bureau's. The incongruity of the situation had made no appeal to his sense of humour. His absolute loyalty to Patience forbade his being angered at her; he could only sum up the whole affair as being one of the incomprehensible American jokes in which the girl's soul delighted. Nevertheless, he was conscious of a distinct desire that the joke should have passed completely out of her mind, before he made another effort to have her society quite to himself. Accordingly, then, his calls were as frequent as before that winter afternoon, his plans for her amusement as elaborate; but he took care that a third person should be always present, to serve as a species of psychological buffer between Patience Tyler's American sense of humour and his own serious British self.

True to his recent tactics, he forcibly annexed Leleu to his other side, as he came out from the Clarendon with

Patience and turned westward along Sainte Anne Street to Tara Hall. The street outside the door, already blocked with carriages and with loitering foot passers, offered an impenetrable barrier to their trio, however, and one by one they slid through the crowd as best they might. When they reached their seats, Sir Morris was chagrined to find that the inevitable shuffling of the groups had left him between Arline and Leleu, with Jimmy and Patience quite at the other end of the row. Rescue was impossible. He could only fold his arms, grit his teeth, and stare darkly at the stage. Fortunately for him, the leader was already raising his baton, as they took their seats. Sir Morris was quite within his conventional rights as he sat there, speechless, glowering at the assembled orchestra where an occasional green sash or scarlet facing stood out in bold relief from the usual black and white evening dress of the rest of the men.

Sir Morris was musical. Nevertheless, that night, he was out of temper, and the Gallic interpretation of the *Unfinished Symphony* went upon his nerves and left him wholly thankful that it had never been carried to its lawful completion. What business had a raw orchestra, mainly made up of amateur musicians, to attempt the work of the masters? But a moment later, his brow cleared, and he reversed his former criticism, as the musicians swung into the *Danse Macabre*, playing it with a fire, a *verve* which completely overshadowed his previous recollections of it. The diabolism of the solo violin filled him with joyous excitement, and he caught himself, under his breath, repeating the old quatrain, —

*Zig et zig, zig et zig, la Mort en cadence
Frappant une tombe avec son talon
La Mort, a minuit, joue un air de danse,
Zig et zig et zag, sur son violon.*

And the violin lost itself in the general carnival of sound, and the theme grew madder and more mad, until it seemed to Sir Morris that the whole tense atmosphere of those last days of political strife had swept into the little hall, had fallen upon the players and had turned their blood to spirit, and set the spirit all ablaze.

"Oh, good evening, Madame Leleu! How well you are looking! Good evening, Sir Morris."

Sir Morris turned his head. Quite unobserved, St. Just had come into the vacant seat behind them.

"So sorry to have been so late; but I was busy at the office," the Frenchman went on easily. "These are hard days for us of the press. One never knows when the next sensation will arise. It is the time for eternal vigilance. Good evening, Leleu. Is there any news, my politician?"

"Nothing later than to-night's *Cartier*," Leleu said, with quiet, stinging emphasis. "That is always sure to be a few hours ahead of the fact."

St. Just shrugged his shoulders.

"You are bitter, my friend. Of what use is a journal, if it only follows on the heels of the event? No one will read of the past, when he can instead have a glimpse of the future. Then you say you have no news?"

Arline turned about suddenly.

"Only this," she said, with a smile, as she gave St. Just her folded programme. "You should devote a column to this, to-morrow."

He looked up and laughed, while his fingers shut on the programme.

"And is the *Dance of Death* a hint for the Government?" he asked gayly. "If so, it would have been well to have followed it with a funeral march."

"That should come after the intermission," she answered. "No; keep the programme. Sir Morris will allow me to share his, and you may need that to refresh

your memory, to-morrow. I shall expect an illuminating criticism built out of the *Danse*, you know." And, with a gay little nod and smile, she turned back to speak to Sir Morris.

Jimmy, on the other end of the row, faced Patience a little sternly.

"You saw it, too?" he demanded.

"Perhaps —"

"Don't fib, Miss Tyler. This is too serious a case for that," he said briefly.

Then Patience gave assent.

"Yes, I saw it."

"What do you think it was?"

"I could n't tell. Some sort of a letter."

Impatiently Jimmy beat the palm of his left hand with his rolled-up programme. Then he looked up. His eyes were grave, but not unkindly. His voice, too low to be heard by those sitting in front, yet was strong with dignity.

"I think," he said slowly; "that the time has come to speak out."

Patience drew a deep breath. Then, unconscious of herself as a child, she passed her hand across her forehead as if brushing away a physical weight.

"Yes," she said then. "It is. But to whom?"

"To him."

"To Mr. Leleu?" She shook her head. "Never. It would kill him."

Jimmy shut his teeth.

"Men don't die so easily. Better if they did. But who then?"

"The other," she answered, mindful of listening ears.

In his turn, Jimmy shook his head.

"I'm half afraid — not of him, of course; but of myself. I might only make it worse. I think, instead, I'll try her first."

Patience made doubtful assent.

"It may be better so. Still —" she flushed scarlet, as she turned to him appealingly; "be gentle, Mr. Lord. Even with Arline, it is possible to make it infinitely worse. Blame her as we will, the mischief is done and we mustn't be too merciless now."

And Jimmy lowered his eyes.

"Trust me," he said briefly. "I'll do my best."

Early the next morning, Arline received a note from Mrs. Brooke Lord, urging her to lunch, that day, on the Grande Allée. The servant, however, who admitted Arline, told her that Mrs. Brooke Lord had just telephoned up to the house that she had been delayed in her shopping and might be a little late in her return. Would Mrs. Leleu please go directly to the library?

Somewhat to Arline's surprise, she found Jimmy, book in hand, settled before the library fire. As a general rule, Jimmy Lord's morning hours were not given over to domestic idling. He looked up, as his sister came into the room.

"You at last, Arline? Glad to see you. You are getting to be quite a stranger," he said, as he rose and brought forward a chair.

"You saw me, last night," she reminded him.

Jimmy forced back the cloud in his eyes.

"Yes; but it's not the same. And you come here so rarely, nowadays."

"I know," she assented a little sadly. "But — Do you really and truly miss me?"

He laughed while, still standing beside her chair, he took her face in his strong, lean hands and tilted it upward till he could meet her eyes.

"You were my legacy from the pater, you know. He told me to take care of you."

"Yes," she assented again.

"And you went off and married Leleu."

"Yes."

"And now I suppose it's not my place to take care of you, any more."

"Why not?" she asked abruptly.

"Because it is Leleu's right now," he answered.

A hard note crept into her voice which before had been only dreary.

"But he doesn't do it, Jimmy; not, at least, the way you used to do."

Jimmy's hands, though still caressing, slid to her shoulders where they lay, half buried in the fluffy trimmings of her gown.

"Arline," he said gravely; "Leleu adores you. He would breathe for you, if you would let him."

"But that's not what I want, not what I need," she answered impatiently. "Jimmy, we women know ourselves better than you men think we do. Amédée adores me; but he lets me go my way."

Taking his hands from her shoulders, Jimmy crossed the rug and stood leaning against the mantel.

"Whose fault is it, Arline?" he asked her then.

"Not mine," she flashed hotly.

"I think it is." Jimmy's tone was very gentle. "When first you were married, you refused to go Leleu's way; you opposed him at every point; when you did yield here and there, it was only from necessity, and you took pains to show him that you grudged the yielding, that you considered his way inferior to your own."

"And so it was," she broke in impetuously.

"Not at all. It was different; but it was quite as good. In fact, it was even a little better. Leleu is making himself a record I should be proud to claim. If he died, to-morrow, he would leave a name that you might be proud to bear. And, now," suddenly and by steps of

which he had taken no heed, he came around to the point at which he had been vaguely aiming, ever since his words to Patience, the night before ; " and now, Arline, for the sake of us all, see to it that you bear the name worthily and in all honour."

His voice throbbed with his own earnestness and, at his final words, he lowered his eyes from his sister's reddening face. The next instant, he started, as if at a blow, when her insolent laugh fell upon his ears.

"Melodrama isn't your strong point, Jimmy," she said lazily, although, beneath its mockery, her voice clashed like steel. "You need the help of a dim light and slow music. No *zig et zig et zag* for you ; you sound like a leaf from a novel for the Young Person. What have I done, to bring down upon myself this lecture ?"

For a moment, Jimmy looked her full in the face. All the gentleness had gone out of her ; leaning back in her deep chair, she faced him with the angry eyes of an insulted queen. Queenly she was in her beauty ; queenly, too, in the very power of her scorn. Jimmy looked steadily at her for an instant. Then once more he lowered his eyes. It was not in Jimmy Lord's nature to watch any woman, least of all his sister, as she flinched beneath the blow which he was about to deal.

"What have you done ?" he echoed. "Ask Achille St. Just."

But Arline had no thought of flinching. She sprang to her feet, faced him ; then, scarlet with anger, she took one step forward. The next instant, she flung her hands backward and locked them behind her.

"Please explain yourself, Jimmy," she said, with icy politeness. "I fear I do not quite understand what you mean."

Her deliberate, controlled courtesy was full of bitter



“ ‘ Please explain yourself, Jimmy,’ she said, with icy politeness.”

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scorn. It struck like a lash in the face, and it drove him to even plainer speech.

"Merely this," he said, with a quiet which matched her own; "as Leleu's friend, as your brother, I can stand by no longer and watch you making a friend of a man like St. Just."

She raised her brows.

"And why not, if you please? And who gave you the right to choose my friends?"

Still Jimmy tried to hold himself steady.

"The dear old pater. He left you to me, Arline. He told me to look out for you. I've tried my best. Even now that you are the wife of another man, I am trying still."

"Thank you. I am sure it is very kind of you," she said coldly.

He bit his lip.

"Arline, be reasonable. I know I am saying it all wrong; but do be patient, dear. I thought I had it all planned out in my head, and your taking it wrong has put it all out of order."

"Oh, I begin to see." Arline's tone was colder and more hard. "It was all a pretty little plot; was it? I was to be asked here, not to lunch with Molly, but to be lectured by you. It was very clever, only —" And, turning, she moved towards the door.

"Arline, wait!" Jimmy's voice was imperious now. "We have gone too far to stop; we must finish the subject once for all."

Turning slightly, she looked at him from over her shoulder.

"What subject?"

"St. Just."

Deliberately she faced about, crossed the floor again and took her place at the other end of the rug.

"What about Monsieur St. Just, Jimmy?" she asked, with the weary acquiescence that one bestows upon an insistent child.

"There is no use in mincing matters, Arline. You know you are altogether too friendly to St. Just."

"He is Amédée's friend, too, Amédée's friend years before I ever met him," she answered.

"Amédée's enemy, rather," Jimmy corrected her. "Arline, it is the talk of the city that St. Just and his paper have worked systematically to spy out the Liberal camp; that he has supported Leleu's election for that end; that he has haunted Leleu's house, has made the most of his former friendship, in order to betray him in that end."

"Oh," Arline smiled. "Is that all?"

This time, Jimmy looked her full in the face, to measure the effect of his blow.

"And moreover," he added slowly; "it is also said that Leleu's wife, knowingly or unknowingly, is a party to the betrayal. I have denied it as long as I could and since it has been impossible to ignore the story. Now, though, it is impossible any longer either to ignore or to deny."

"Why?" Coldly, deliberately, Arline allowed the single syllable to fall upon the stillness.

Jimmy spun about on his heel, walked away to the window, walked back again to the fire.

"Because you were seen, last night, to give a note to St. Just under cover of your programme."

"Who saw it?"

"I."

"Are you sure?"

"Miss Tyler saw it, too."

Her lip curled.

"And so you have been discussing me with another woman! Does that also come into your scheme for taking care of me?"

"Arline!" But again he controlled himself. "Are you ready to deny the fact?" he demanded steadily.

For one long instant, Arline's eyes met the eyes of her brother without flinching. Then, when the scarlet tide had covered her cheeks and mounted even to the edge of her hair, her violet eyes drooped. Silently she turned away and opened the door leading into the hall.

"Arline."

She paused, irresolute. Then once more she faced about.

"Well?"

"You have not answered my question."

She took a swift, short breath. Then she lifted her arm and spoke rapidly.

"Answered your question! No. Why should I? The very asking it is an insult. The very speaking to Patience is another insult, to her as much as to me. No man but one has the right to ask me such questions, and he, my husband, is too generous, too loyal. As for you, you are only a spy. You drove me into my marriage by your spying; now you seek to ruin the marriage you have made. As for Achille St. Just, I care nothing for him. Not that!" A tatter of lace from her gown fell to the floor. "He is Amédée's friend; he has worked hard to bring Amédée into prominence, worked harder still to bring him into allegiance with what is bound to be the ruling power. And I, I am proud to help him, to be helped by him. As for you, Jimmy, your hints and your innuendoes and suspicions only go to show the colour of your mind, and that is black, all black. No; you needn't say any more. You have said too much, as it is. The rest you can talk over with Patience Tyler. It is nothing I care to hear. Tell Molly that I am sorry she was late, that it was impossible for me to wait any longer."

"But, dear —"

Heedless of his words, of his detaining hand, of his

anxious, loving eyes, she brushed past him to the table where she had left her hat and coat. The next instant, the door had closed behind her.

Then and then only Jimmy's shoulders drooped together. Turning, he re-entered the library which, all at once, seemed to him to be strangely still.

"Oh, by Jove!" he said forlornly, as he rested one arm across the oaken mantel and stared down at the smouldering fire. "Oh, by Jove!" he repeated, after a pause. "What's the use of good intentions, when they only serve to stir up hell?"

Slowly, reluctantly, he put on his fur-lined coat, took up his hat and left the house. At the foot of the steps, he halted, irresolute. Then he crossed the street, crossed the park, entered the side door of the Parliament Buildings and turned towards Leleu's private office.

St. Just had been called to Montreal, that day. Returning in the early evening, he dropped in at his office for a moment, before going on to his room and his dinner. Conspicuously laid on the top of his desk, quite apart from the little heap of his mail, was a letter, sealed, yet without a stamp. St. Just glanced swiftly at the writing on the envelope; then tore the envelope open.

Once, twice, he read the few lines written within. Then he laughed a short, sharp laugh and stood for an instant, frowning, his narrowing eyes fixed upon the opposite wall. Then he laughed again and, tossing his hat on a chair, he sat down at his desk, drew towards him a sheaf of paper and, dipping his pen, fell to work. Now and again his pen halted; but a glance at the letter, lying open by his side, set the pen in motion once more.

The letter was from Amédée Leleu. Crisply and without question or comment, it bade St. Just to discontinue his calls at the Clarendon.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TWENTY-FOUR hours later, Quebec was at fever heat. The *Cartier*, now avowedly upon the side of the bolting Liberals, claimed to have unearthed another governmental scandal. Names were suppressed ; but facts were given, and, at countless dinner tables, that night, random guesses spoken over the soup, settled into comparative certainty with the coming of the joint.

It had never been the policy of the *Cartier* to mince matters, least of all since the illness of the chief had put St. Just in charge. His first thrusts were straight and deep. His thrusts once made, then he gave one or two turns of the wrist before he drew the weapon from the wound. From the first, he had taken up the cause of the bolting ministers ; had lavished untold scorn upon the taciturn paper which was pledged to the support of the Government ; had even, in reminding them of their duty to the best of the Liberal party, threatened them with a possible new paper which, leading them in the road to professional loyalty, should yet sweep the commercial ground from beneath their feet. So specious had been the arguments and predictions that nine people out of ten believed that a new paper was imminent. The tenth, reading between the lines, read the truth : that the new Liberal paper would only arise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old Conservative one. And meanwhile St. Just, scattering powder with one hand, with the other arranged a line of fire extinguishers, so that all things might be in readiness for any event. His columns

were filled with communications from indignant Liberals, received, as was elaborately set forth in introductory notes, because they were refused admission to their party organ. The editorials were scrupulously impartial, hurling blame on all sides, pointing out to all alike the means of political regeneration. And, in the meantime, the province was losing its own self-respect, losing the respect of the entire dominion. Still, no one dared to demand an investigation. After a general washing-day, the garments must be hung out on the line.

For a day or two, there had been an interval of quiet. The quiet, however, only threw into stronger relief the succeeding shock. The charges of the *Cartier* were brief and simple. It denounced one of the younger Liberal members as having been bought up by Conservative interests. It claimed that he had won his seat from a Conservative constituency by money supplied by a Conservative well known in the business and financial circles of the city, that his avowed loyalty to the Government party, his avowed disapproval of the more honourable and progressive element represented by the bolters had been by the orders of his Conservative patrons, and finally that the Government, yielding in its present crisis to the needed support of Conservative millions, had sent for the member and held out tentative offers concerning a seat in the cabinet. For the rest, the *Cartier* was reticent. It promised, however, within the week to publish the names, together with affidavits concerning conversations which had taken place in the presence of the editor. These conversations concerned bribery and the rating of each man according to his price. They had been spoken between the member and the well-known Conservative, and they covered a term extending from two years past up to the night after the last general election. The agreement, neither new nor hasty, was so much the more unpardonable.

The old government was obviously rotten to the core. Something must be done to keep the rot from spreading. In conclusion, the *Cartier* reminded its readers that, long since, it had warned them of just this danger, as bound to develop from the ranks of the dreamers of a new régime.

By chance, Leleu was one of the last people in the city to hear of the new sensation. All that afternoon, he had been shut up in the office of Monsieur Aucune, weighing bit by bit his own fitness for the new responsibilities which were opening before him. The dazzle had left his eyes, and once more he could see clearly. The road before him was straight and narrow as Little Champlain Street; like Little Champlain Street, it ended against a rocky wall which could be scaled only by a flight of Breakneck Stairs. Like Little Champlain Street, too, its entrance was flanked by the two alternatives, Cul de Sac or the elevator, an aimless passage on the lower level, or an easy, irresponsible slipping to the upper plane. The road was narrow; the stairs would be hard. Nevertheless, he chose them. Better to win up by his own effort than to be hoisted up, or to remain below. The crisis was upon them. It called for men of steady, self-sacrificing energy. Chosen, he would do his best.

He came late to dinner, his cheeks blazing not alone from the fierce outer cold, but from the fiercer fires within his brain. He found Arline dressed and awaiting him. Her cheeks, too, burned hotly; her eyes were aflame. As Leleu greeted her, he took swift note of her nervousness; and, meanwhile, he attributed it to her excitement over his own concerns. The crushed and tattered copy of that night's *Cartier* lay, a little heap of white, light ashes, beneath the glowing grate.

They were still loitering over their dinner, when Leleu was called to the telephone. Stanwood Tyler was asking for a business talk.

"Come here, if you don't mind," he added. "Patience will be out, and we can be more free from interruption over here."

Stanwood Tyler himself opened the door to Leleu and led the way up-stairs. His greeting, cordial, was full of kindly gravity. Even in his own excitement, Leleu felt a swift reliance upon the strength of the big, silent American before him.

Stanwood drew a chair to the fire, and brought out the impedimenta of smoking. Then, without more ado, he spoke.

"Leleu," he said shortly; "I sent for you to tell you I am ready to stand by you in this thing. What can I do first?"

Seated, his cigarette between his fingers, Leleu stared up at his host as if, of a sudden, he had gone daft.

"What thing?" he inquired blankly.

It was the turn of Stanwood Tyler now to stare.

"You've not seen to-night's *Cartier*?"

Leleu shook his head.

"The dev— Oh, damnation, Leleu! I had no idea I'd have to tell you," Stanwood blurted out, in swift contrition.

Leleu paled, and his hands shut on the arms of his chair.

"What now?" he asked briefly.

Stanwood thrust his fists into his pockets and stamped the length of the room, chewing fiercely, the while, upon the amber mouth-piece of his pipe. When he came back to Leleu's side, the *Cartier* was in his hand.

"You'd best read it," he said. "Then you can see for yourself. I'm sorry. I supposed you must have seen it." Then he turned his back and fell to clattering the tongs against the coals in the grate.

The sound of a moving chair made him face about

once more. Leleu was on his feet, stepping towards his overcoat and hat.

"You are going?"

"To St. Just."

"He's not in his office now."

"I know where to find him."

"Is it wise, think?"

"It is the only thing to do."

"But before you have had time to think the thing over?"

"Things like this need no thinking."

"No," Stanwood assented slowly. "Perhaps you are right. They don't. Shall I come with you?"

Leleu shook his head.

"No. I'm best alone. But I thank you."

Stanwood followed him to the door.

"You'll come back here?"

"Perhaps. It is impossible to tell." Then he went quietly down the stairs.

For a moment, Stanwood lingered to look after him. Leleu's face was white and drawn, his lips twitching, his hands unsteady. It was only for a moment that Stanwood's back had been turned away, yet that moment had sufficed to make Leleu's eyes look sunken and heavy. In their sunken depths, however, there burned a sombre fire. Amédée Leleu was as one smitten in a mortal part, that part his honour. Nevertheless, Stanwood Tyler, watching, made no effort to hold him back from the coming interview. Leleu, in that hour, was no plastic boy. He was a man, and he owned a man's whole right to avenge his tarnished name. He was angry; but his anger was within the full control of his reason. St. Just had no cause to look with pleasure upon the coming hour, yet Stanwood felt sure that the morrow would bring no sting of remorse upon Amédée Leleu.

Contrary to Stanwood Tyler's prediction, Leleu found St. Just in his office. He liked it better so. The very impersonality of the place gave him strength and steadiness for the talk. St. Just glanced up with seeming indifference, as Leleu came in upon him.

"Good evening, Leleu," he said. "Sit down, and I'll be with you in a moment."

He spoke with perfect quiet. Nevertheless Leleu, whose senses were strained to five-fold their normal power, saw the pencil point in his hand cast a quivering shadow upon the paper above which it had stayed itself.

"As you will," Leleu answered briefly. But he remained standing.

With infinite deliberation, St. Just finished his notes and filed the notes away in a drawer. Then he whirled about sharply and faced Leleu.

"Well," he said; "name your figure."

His very suddenness took Leleu off his guard.

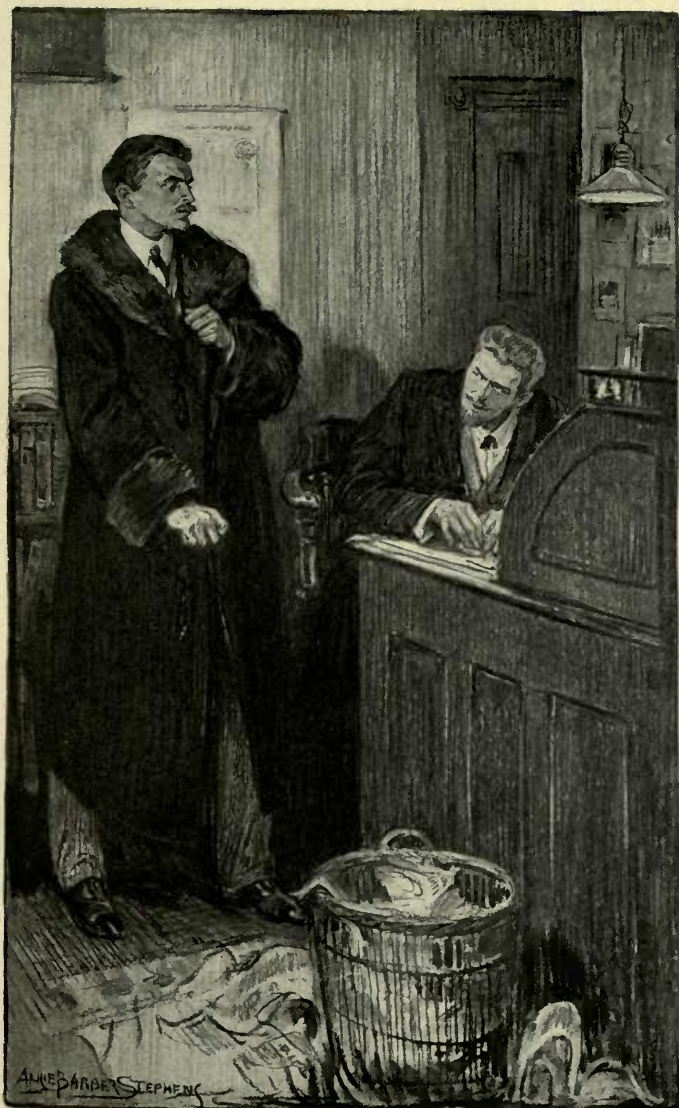
"My figure," he echoed.

"Yes." St. Just's tone was nonchalant. "Of course, you want this thing hushed up. In fact, I was expecting you, and waited here in the office, to-night, sure that you would come. There is no use wasting words. What are you ready to pay?"

There came a pause, almost imperceptible, yet long enough to allow St. Just to congratulate himself that he had won the game. Then he quailed before the fury in Leleu's face.

"By heaven, St. Just! If you repeat that once again, you shall lie dead on your office floor."

Over the polished floor, St. Just's chair rolled backward for an inch or two, and he shut his hand on the edge of his desk, as if to gain support for his shaking fingers. When he spoke, he accompanied his words with a little laugh; but the laugh came from whitening lips.



“ St. Just glanced up with seeming indifference, as Leleu came in upon him.” *Page 196.*

"It is no use to bluster, my dear Leleu. The game is all for me. If I play my cards to the end, you suffer."

With a mighty effort, Leleu had regained his grasp upon himself.

"You have no cards that are genuine, or that can be played with honour."

St. Just laughed again. Then, letting go his desk, he picked up his pencil and fell to examining its point.

"Honour?" He raised his brows. "Then you still talk of honour, my dear Leleu?"

"There is no man living who dares talk to me of dishonour," Leleu retorted curtly.

"I suppose," St. Just made nonchalant reply. "Such things, as a rule, are not to be put into words. Still, there comes a time when one no longer can be silent. Such a time appears to be upon us."

Leleu faced him, angrily, but with steady eyes.

"You mean?" he questioned.

"That you are bought, body and soul, by Brooke Lord. That you are pledged to support his interests before a rotten government. That, in return, he has paid for your election to your seat. I myself have heard him talk with you in regard to the price he must pay."

"When?"

"On the steamer, when I had the pleasure of crossing in the company of you both. On the night which preceded the last provincial dissolution. For the rest of it —"

Leleu took the words off from his very lips.

"It is a black lie."

St. Just smiled at the point of the pencil in his hand.

"I have my proofs."

"Produce them," Leleu demanded fearlessly.

St. Just barely glanced up at the intrepid face and figure, at the flaming eyes before him. Then, ever so slightly, he shrugged his shoulders.

"Impossible, my dear fellow ; at least, for the present."

"But why?"

"Merely because there is some one else involved in the case."

"Who then?"

"My informant."

Leleu gritted his teeth at the delay, at the lazy, insolent voice.

"Who then?" he reiterated abruptly.

Again St. Just smiled inscrutably at the pencil point.

"Who then?" he repeated. "Oh, merely your wife."

The next instant, there was a crash and a soft thud. Then Leleu went out and shut the door, leaving St. Just on the floor beside his overturned and broken chair.

To Arline Leleu, the evening was dragging heavily by. A mood of utter depression had followed the nervous tension of the hour when she had sat waiting for Leleu to come home to dinner. Then she had been braced to face the coming storm. There had been no storm, however, and now the inevitable reaction had followed upon the tensivity of her previous mood. She was too apathetic even to reason about the failure of the storm to break. It was inconceivable that Leleu should not have seen the *Cartier*, Leleu who always read the papers daily and with care. It must be that, in his present absorption in his own interests, he had failed to behold the truth which was so open to all the world besides, or, beholding, to give it any heed. Of his summons from Stanwood Tyler, Arline took no thought. Stanwood was wholly out of the political fellowship. He doubtless wished to consult Leleu about investments or some trivial question of legislation. At best, the American engineer was a bit of a bore. Arline yawned slightly, tossed aside her book and, clasping her arms against the chair-back above her head, fell to thinking of Leleu, to wishing that he would return. It was

dull, the sitting there alone. Of late and since Leleu had been so busy, Arline had found now and then that she missed him more acutely than she would have liked to confess.

Then, as she thought of the future, coming now so near at hand, she smiled regretfully and a little more gently than it was her wont to do. The future would change so many things; and, all in all, the present was good enough. True, bit by bit, she was renouncing her cherished dream of moulding her husband into the outer likeness of her own race and creed and party. To the last phase, she had given all the strength of her imperious will, all the wile of her wifely cunning. It had all been quite in vain. Leleu's liberalism could be neither bent nor broken. By race and creed and temperament, he was wholly alien to the ideals of a Protestant Imperialism by whose teaching the plastic young colonial life should be tightly laced in the stays of English thought and ambition. It was useless to strive, or even to argue. She could only leave his politics, as she had done his racial allegiance, an open question between them, and gain what pleasure she could from his swift advancement. She had tried and failed. St. Just had agreed to help her; but now he had given up the game. Too bad of him to invent this last sensation, mere froth of party journalism though it was! It was bound to annoy her husband, and, just now, he was plainly bearing too much care already. Poor old Amédée! He had looked so tired, of late.

She had expended a share of her nervous energy, that night, in making an elaborate toilette for dinner. Now, as she lay back in the deep chair, her hands clasped above her head, the full, soft lace fell back from her rounded arms, her pale gown swept the floor at her feet. Some whim, or was it some set purpose, had led her to cast aside the jewels which Leleu had bought her. She wore

only the sapphire-studded chain which matched the deep blue eyes above. Against the dark velvet of the chair, her hair, shining in the electric lamps, formed a gleaming halo about her face, and her scarlet lips were curved upwards in the beginnings of a smile. It was so that Leleu found her, when he came striding into the room.

Arline gave one look up into his livid face. Then she started to her feet, lifting her hand, the while, as though to ward off some approaching peril.

"What is it, Amédée?" she asked, and, as she spoke, she felt the words catching in her throat.

Halting upon the threshold, he looked at her for a moment in silence. Arline broke the silence, and her accent was sharp with fear.

"Amédée, what is it? Something has happened."

His answer surprised even himself by its quiet. Not even in his anger could his generations-old tradition be surprised into brutality towards any woman, least of all his wife.

"Yes," he assented. "Something has happened."

Then he crossed the room, unfastened his coat and, slipping it from his shoulders, laid it across a chair. That done, he faced her.

"Arline," he said; "it seems that I have been blind too long. We Leleus, as a race, have not had cause to distrust our wives. I have followed the family tradition and —" Steady himself as he would, his voice began to break a little; but he caught himself up sharply and turned its pathos into scorn; "and it seems I have made a mistake."

His scorn stung her sharply. She had never heard him use that tone to her until then; she could not know that he was adopting it as a means of self-defence. Instead, she met his scorn with scorn.

"You speak in riddles, Amédée."

"I have just come from St. Just," he assured her quietly.

She raised her head haughtily.

"And what of that?"

"I left him unconscious on the floor." There was no heat in the tone. He was merely stating the fact.

Her face grew white. She moved forward impulsively.

"Amédée! Are you hurt?"

But her involuntary alarm for him could not soothe his mental pain. His wound was too deep for that.

"No. St. Just is hurt," he said, as he gazed straight into her dark blue eyes. "For me—" His voice broke once more. "My God, Arline, I think you have killed me."

Smiling a little, she sought to take his hand; but he disregarded the gesture. For an instant, she eyed him askance, while the look in her face slowly turned from wondering pity to a bitter, passionate dislike. Then, stepping backward, she moved quite beyond his reach.

"What have I done?" she asked proudly. "You have no right to talk to me like this. If you must accuse me, then speak out. What is this dreadful thing that I have done?"

His eyes never wavered from her face.

"You have betrayed me to Achille St. Just."

"Amédée!" White with anger, she faced him, her head erect, her eyes meeting his eyes squarely. "Be silent! No living man shall use that word of me!"

Wearily, as if the struggle already were telling on his strength, wearily he raised his hand.

"Wait!" he bade her. "You do not understand. I did not mean the word as you would use it. I am not English. In times like this, your words come slowly to me. I do not distrust your woman's honour, Arline. But you have played me false in many ways. I have feared it;

but the very fear seemed to me an insult to my wife. I know it now. Looking back, I see it all. You and St. Just have made me, made my friends, made my profession, even, the tool for the shaping of his own selfish ambitions."

Her lip curled, and she smiled.

"If I were in your place, Amédée," she said, with slow scorn; "I should hate to confess that I could be made the tool of a man like Monsieur St. Just."

"You!" he laughed bitterly. "Arline, you have been his tool from the very beginning."

"Amédée, you are absurd," she said, in hot anger. "How have I been his tool?"

"In your receptions, in the way you have lured on these men to talk that he might listen. In the way that—" Suddenly he drew a folded paper from his pocket. "Tell me, if you can, how this came to be on St. Just's desk," he demanded.

Even her angry colour faded, as her eyes rested upon the note by which Monsieur Aucune had summoned her husband to the first of their many conferences.

"How should I know?" Her tone rang hard with contempt. "It is not my place to care for the letters you leave lying about." Then, defenceless herself, she took swift refuge in counter attack. "Your suspicions, your accusations are of a piece with all the rest of it. You have spoiled my life, taken it for yours and broken it to bits, and now you make toys of the pieces."

He drew his hand slowly once and yet again across his brow.

"Both our lives are spoiled then, Arline. But tell me, how have I spoiled your own?"

For a moment, she paced the rug with the long, swinging step of an angry creature. Then she faced him again.

"You spoiled it when you forced your way into it, in the first place," she said vehemently. "I was happy, con-

tented with my old friends, in my old life. You came; you cajoled me into a pitiful apology for a wedding, into signing away the religious freedom of my children, into giving up my home, my own social life, giving up everything, in fact, to you. And what have you given up? Nothing. What have you done for me? Taken me into a life where I am an alien, alone and never understood. Oh, yes, you think because I laugh, and wear pretty frocks and dance with the rest, that I don't care. You think I am satisfied because you are getting into a sort of political notoriety. What do you care that you and your politics and your religion all run counter to what I hold most dear? And when I try to swallow my dislike, to make the best of things, and to help you along and make you popular among your political people, you turn on me and accuse me of betraying, of be-tray-ing you to the friend whose help I have been driven to seek. And then, after everything else, you tell me I have spoiled your life. What if I have? What have you done to mine?"

"Tried, as I believe in God —"

"No; never mind that now," she interrupted him. "It is all over. You have ruined my life; you have forced me to give up everything; you have thrown aside the help I would have given you. Amédée Leleu," she faced him sharply; "how far would you have won your present hold, if I had not made my evenings pleasant for your friends? Poor dunces! They came here and talked, talked and babbled. And I endured it, tired and bored as I was, endured it all for your sake. You liked it, so long as you needed its help. You could have stopped it, if you would. Now that you think you are firmly on your feet, you brush away your supporting platform, brush it away without a word of thanks to me for making it." She checked herself abruptly. Then she crossed the room and threw herself down upon the couch at the farther end of the

floor. "No matter," she added wearily. "It is all over now, so why discuss it. I should have been glad of your thanks; in fact, I counted on them. Still, it is no matter; and it is just as well to have the thing end. I sha'n't be able to go out much more till after June. After that," she laughed a little; "after that, who can tell? I used to think it would be rather nice to have a child; but now it seems to me that, considering all things, religion and all, it will only be one barrier the more."

"Arline!"

Leleu stepped forward, with a little cry. For a moment, she lay quiet, looking up at him with a world of defiant scorn in her dark blue eyes. Then she dropped her eyes and turned her face to the wall.

Silence sank over the room. In the hush, Leleu could hear the swish of the blood throbbing in his temples. He waited long, not daring to speak, himself, praying that Arline might break the stillness. The clock ticked softly, and a single coal, crackling in the heat, seemed to jar the room with its sudden tiny explosion. Arline neither moved nor spoke. Over Leleu's face, gray shadows were settling down, his lips drooped and his hands, dangling at his side, opened and shut incessantly. Then at length he turned, picked up his coat and hat and moved towards the door. With his hand on the knob, he halted and looked back, framed his words as if to speak, then checked the impulse and noiselessly left the room, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE next morning at his usual hour, St. Just entered his office. Strips of plaster, interlaced to form a triangle, bedecked his right temple, a purple spot marked his left cheek just in front of the ear. Nevertheless, he answered curtly to the sympathetic surprise of his subordinates, and, with a wholly impenetrable face, crossed the floor to hang up his coat, then seated himself at his desk and drew towards him the little heap of his morning mail.

One after another, St. Just ran his knife along the edges of the envelopes, pulled out their contents, glanced at them and sorted them into orderly piles, ready for a second reading. Twice, in the midst of his hasty examination, he started slightly, once in annoyance, once in obvious pleasure. However, he went on with his methodical work, finished his piles and then went over the separate piles with careful attention. Now and then a letter fluttered down into the great basket at his feet. Now and then he paused, frowning, and vouchsafed a second reading to some communication from an indignant Liberal who demanded that his woes should receive their baptism of printer's ink. At last, he gathered up the piles into a thick sheaf and passed them over to his clerk, together with a few crisp words of instruction. That done, he whirled about in his chair again and took up the two letters he had slipped into a pigeon-hole by themselves, to await his further consideration.

One, the shorter one of the two, was from a local lawyer who stated in behalf of his client, Mr. Brooke Lord, that

unless St. Just made instant and public retraction of his recent innuendo, he should at once proceed to a suit for damages, without waiting for more specific statements, or for the threatened publication of names. St. Just read the letter twice, three times, tapping the while with his pencil upon the desk before him. Still tapping, he sat staring at the orderly pigeon-holes with unseeing eyes which narrowed to a line, then of a sudden widened to show their whites. St. Just nodded slightly, laughed shortly, and tossed the letter aside. Then he picked up the other letter.

This was more bulky, and the flap of the envelope bore the scarlet crest of the Canadian senate. St. Just lingered over it, examined the device, the address and then drew out the sheets within, much as a contented child draws out the plum from his cake. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he settled himself at ease and began to read. The letter was from a well-known Liberal senator. It recapitulated the slow change in the *Cartier's* policy. It pointed out wherein would lie the *Cartier's* best policy for the future, and it closed with a brief question in regard to the present holdings of a controlling interest in the *Cartier's* stock and the stock's probable price. Even as he read, St. Just's fingers moved mechanically towards the drawer of his desk where lay duplicates of many of the company's records.

Suddenly his hand stayed itself, and he glanced up. Sir Morris Plante was just opening the office door.

Outwardly, St. Just was upon friendly terms with Sir Morris Plante. At heart, he liked the great, boyish Englishman not one whit; he feared him more than a little. Thorough-going honesty coupled with British brawn made a man a bad antagonist in a game such as St. Just was playing then. Furthermore, it was wise to be scrupulously polite to a man having the entrée to

Spencer Wood and certain other houses almost as potent in the purely local world. Moreover, from the very fact of his being an alien, bound to no party, nor creed, nor race, Sir Morris was the more likely to insist upon seeing fair play. And, granted he won out in the end, fair play was by no means a principal clause in St. Just's gaming creed. St. Just's conscience was immune from pricks; but his sore head gave a reminiscent twinge, as he looked up to greet the Englishman with a smile.

Sir Morris advanced unsmilingly, ignored the outstretched hand and helped himself to a seat. Then, with the utmost deliberation, he pulled out his eye-glass, screwed it into his eye and took a good, long look at the beplastered brow before him. The eyeglass fell with a click.

"Oh, by Jove!" Sir Morris said then. "So Leleu has been here ahead of me."

In spite of his nonchalant self-control, St. Just turned scarlet with anger at the lazy satisfaction in Sir Morris's tone. Then he put a strong curb upon his temper.

"All the world, sooner or later, comes to the *Cartier* office, Sir Morris."

Sir Morris settled himself tranquilly in his chair.

"Of course. I'm only sorry I could n't have been the early bird, myself."

St. Just's eyes betrayed his puzzlement. Expert linguist that he was, proverbs couched in the vernacular were beyond his ken.

"I do not understand," he said apologetically.

Sir Morris crossed his legs.

"To catch the worm," he explained tersely. Then he added, with boyish gravity, "Of course I've caught him, as you might say; but I'd have liked first lick."

Involuntarily St. Just's hand sought his purple cheek. Then he laughed carelessly.

"I am very dull, Sir Morris. I fear I do not understand."

"Oh, yes; you do," Sir Morris reassured him. "You understand me to perfection, only you don't care to let on. Do you know anything about our public schools?"

St. Just smiled alertly.

"Ah, I begin to understand. I forgot that you were here, a student. You were sent to me from the office of education?"

Again the lazy amusement crept into the eyes of Sir Morris Plante. In spite of his efforts to conceal the fact, St. Just obviously was lacking in his wonted dexterity of mind, that morning. His evasions were slow, clumsy, wholly obvious.

"No; I'm not hunting any Quebec education, this morning," he said placidly.

St. Just interrupted him.

"It is well. There is little you would find."

"Possibly. In certain ways, the city is very like France," Sir Morris replied imperturbably. "But I was asking you if you knew anything about our English public schools."

"A very little, too little for my content," St. Just answered, with careful politeness.

"So I judged. Do you know what is one of the first lessons they teach us?" Sir Morris pursued calmly.

"I have not heard."

Sir Morris uncrossed his legs and crossed them the other way.

"Well, it's this: when we meet a sneak, to lick him into some sense of decency and honour."

St. Just glanced hastily at Sir Morris. Then he slid his chair slightly so that a corner of the desk should be between them.

"I see. It is different with us. We fight an even battle."

Sir Morris spoke with level emphasis.

"So do we, when we meet a man," he averred tranquilly.

St. Just delivered counter stroke.

"Ah? Then your training has not been wholly in England?" he queried.

Sir Morris eyed him as a St. Bernard dog might have eyed a soft, elastic puppy, before knocking him over with a turn of his burly paw. Then he spoke.

"Mostly. You see we had a French fellow at Eton, and I used to keep my hand in, licking him at odd times. He generally needed a licking, you know."

St. Just's lips went white.

"Monsieur is humourous, to-day," he observed dryly in French.

Sir Morris answered him in his own tongue.

"On the contrary, I am quite in earnest." Then he lapsed into English again. "Now see here, St. Just," he said quietly; "as a rule, I don't mix up in the next man's affairs. It's bad manners; it's not my way. Still, when I see a round half-dozen of my friends having their lives tormented out of them by an arrant, lying scoundrel —"

"Monsieur!" St. Just started up from his chair.

Sir Morris waved him back.

"Sit it out, man," he admonished him. "You may as well save your strength. You may need it. Where was I? Oh, yes. By an arrant, lying scoundrel, I propose to take a hand in suppressing that scoundrel and — No, sit down! You are not to open that door."

St. Just bit his lip angrily. Then, with a deft gesture, he reached out under Sir Morris's arm and struck the button of an electric bell.

Very quietly Sir Morris Plante faced him.

"I don't care to boast," he said; "but I have done some boxing in my day, and I outweigh you by ninety pounds.

May I advise you to let me speak to the boy, when he comes ?”

With an inarticulate oath, St. Just bent over his desk. Sir Morris turned a placid face to the boy who appeared upon the threshold.

“Monsieur St. Just merely wishes no one to disturb him.” He tossed a coin to the youngster. “You understand? He will be busy for about fifteen minutes more.”

He turned back to find the Frenchman facing him in angry scorn.

“The law will see to this,” he said bitterly. “Even the English law is not afraid of Sir Morris Plante.”

Sir Morris laughed.

“No ; but Monsieur St. Just is afraid of the English law,” he observed. Then he straightened up in his chair. “Now look here, St. Just, there is no use in wasting words. You know you are a blasted scoundrel. You have slandered Brooke Lord ; you have made it impossible for Leleu to enter this provisional cabinet ; you have made his wife the talk of half the town. You have betrayed your paper, your friends. The worst of it is, you have gone so far that no retraction can make good the harm you have done.”

“I have no intention to retract,” St. Just said sullenly.

“Not now, perhaps ; but I fancy the intention will come to you later. However, that’s as may be. There are still some things that retraction can’t undo. Down in the States, Tyler tells me, they would paint a man in tar and then roll him in feathers for a thing of this sort. The Canadians have a few things yet to learn of the States. I fancy even you might find out the value of discretion, while you were busy picking yourself. Still, this is n’t the States, so I must adopt the English method.”

“And that ?” St. Just queried, with a sneer.

Slowly Sir Morris rose to his feet and squared his wide, clean-cut shoulders.

"And that," he responded calmly; "is to lick you. First of all, though, St. Just, I want you to know why I do it. It's for no personal grudge. As far as I am concerned, you can babble all day; your words don't count the value of the ink that goes into them. They're black, of course; but they don't weigh anything. No. Hear me out. You can take your turn, if you feel like it, when your paper goes to press. But now hear me out. Leleu has evidently been down here to lick you for the harm you've done his wife. If I lick you, it will be for the general menace you've been to society, for—"

A deprecating hand rapped on the door, far down on the middle panels. Sir Morris stayed his speech.

"Come in," he said.

The door swung open, and upon the threshold there appeared the tiniest of the office boys, his weazen little face wrinkled in terror of what might befall the one who had the temerity to disturb the temporary chief. Sir Morris looked down at him, smiled and, with a forward stride, laid his hand on the spiky hair.

"What is it, youngster?" he asked cheerily.

The boy caught his breath, in sharp revulsion from his former terror.

"A telegram for Monsieur St. Just," he answered then.

"It is marked 'rush,' and I was afraid to wait."

"Afraid to come in, too, I fancy," Sir Morris said kindly, as he took the telegram and tossed it to St. Just's desk. "Run away now. Monsieur St. Just will ring, when the answer is ready."

The crackle of paper was followed by an instant's hush. Then St. Just laughed harshly, threw aside the telegram, crossed to the window, came back to the desk, lighted a cigarette, then laughed again and still more harshly.

"*Messieurs, le jeu est fait,*" he quoted, and even Sir Morris shrank at the rasping bitterness which he had contrived to give to the familiar phrase.

"You have bad news?" he asked, with the traditional courtesy which had trained him to show gentleness to all who were in trouble.

For his only answer, St. Just jerked the telegram towards Sir Morris. Stooping, Sir Morris read the crisp words.

"I reach Quebec to-night. Publish no more politics."

And the message, dated from a town in northern New York, bore the signature of St. Just's too long absent chief.

Sir Morris took up his hat. Then he faced back to St. Just and stood for a moment, gazing at him with thoughtful, frank, blue eyes.

"Old man, I believe I'm rather sorry for you, after all," he said slowly. "You are in the devil of a mess, though, to be sure, the mess is wholly of your own mixing. Still, I have a notion that you're in a way to get all the licking that's good for you, without much help from me. You don't deserve any sympathy or advice. However, if I were you — and thank the Lord, I'm not! — I'd pack my boxes as fast as I could and sail on the Tunisian, at four, to-morrow afternoon."

Then Sir Morris, turning on his heel, went out of the office and closed the door behind him.

And, meanwhile, Père Leleu was pacing slowly to and fro on the topmost gallery which overhangs the little Seminary garden. Sheltered from the wind sweeping down from the north and east, open to the southern sunshine, the long gallery seemed, that February morning, to have a climate all its own. Around it, the rigours of the Canadian winter were still unabated. The ice-cakes still ground against each other in the wide river beneath

the cliff, the Levis shore was glistening under its heaps of snow, and even the garden just below the gallery was buried in drifts that covered every hint of the paths and the low arbours which offered such an attractive pleasure ground in the summer. Nevertheless, up on the gray old gallery the sun lay warm and caressing, and the Laval spires at the left rose up athwart a sky blue as of an Italian noon.

From end to end of the long gallery Père Leleu paced back and forth with steady, thoughtful steps. From under his black beretta, his soft white hair stood out in a gleaming fringe. One thin, muscular hand was shut on a fold of his soutane, and his ascetic, high-bred face was turned towards the shining heights of Levis where the sun, resting upon a convent roof, lighted its cross to flaming gold. Nevertheless, Père Leleu's clear dark eyes were heedless of the cross just then, and of its flaming import. Ascetic he might be, and wholly consecrated to the religious life; yet he could not turn a deaf ear to the flying rumours that all was not well with his nephew, Amédée Leleu. Hearing, he could not easily forget that, of his three nephews, Amédée was his favourite. By rights, Père Leleu's mind should have been filled with the fact that he was to preach in the Basilica, on the next Sunday morning. Instead, he vaguely wondered how soon it would be wise for him to send for his nephew to come to talk with him. Then he lifted his eyes to see a messenger standing before him on the gallery.

"Your nephew is below. He would speak to you."

"Bring him here," Père Leleu made swift reply.

A moment later, Leleu, white, wan and heavy-eyed, came out on the gallery with the step of one who walks in his sleep. Before Père Leleu, he halted and spoke, his eyes resting on the sun-striped floor.

"My uncle, I have sinned," he said, and his accent was

piteous as the accent of a tired child. "I do not know how much; I do not know exactly how. Still, before I go to confession, even, I need to ask your judgment, your advice."

It was only for an instant that Père Leleu glanced at him in silence. That instant, however, sufficed to show him the disordered dress, the unshaven face, the heavy, sunken eyes of his nephew. Then, with a smile and with a touch, firm, but of an ineffable gentleness, he stepped forward and drew Leleu's hot, dry hand through his arm.

"I am glad you are come," he said; "for I have been thinking of you. Père Du Sort is your confessor, Amédée. Forget that I am anything but your old uncle, and speak to me as you will. I too, even here, have known my sorrows. Perhaps I can help you in your own."

Leleu hesitated. Then he gazed up into the face above him, calm, ascetic and full of love and of human understanding, and, in one passionate, turbulent tide, he poured out the whole story of the past winter weeks, of the past days, and of that last, tragic night.

Now and then, during the hours since he had left Arline, it had seemed to Leleu that the night would never end. He had walked the streets for cold and weary miles, seeking by physical exhaustion to deaden his agony of mind. Down by the bank of the St. Charles, out on the Grande Allée, in the dull monotony of Richelieu Street and at the bend of Palace Hill, the policemen on their beats had wondered at the solitary figure moving steadily along the midnight streets. He took no heed of passing hours, nor of the waning night; but the morning was still gray, when, almost without his own volition, his step turned to the familiar gate of the Basilica and, entering, he cast himself down at the altar rail just within its doors.

But even there no help awaited him. The chancel was

hung with black; close at his side, the huge, black-covered bier lifted its terraced bulk in readiness for some early-morning funeral mass, and the nave echoed with the slow steps of a solitary black-robed priest who moved to and fro, arranging the triple ranks of tall white candles. Leleu buried his face in his hands, seeking oblivion; then he lifted his head abruptly. What was the justice of all those trappings of woe set forth for death alone, when he, facing a future which was worse than death, would be denied the luxury of a single moan? So long as Arline lived, it mattered nothing, as to outward form, that Arline's love was dead. He rose, left the Basilica and, crossing the narrow court, opened the wide oak doors of the Seminary Chapel, passed the bronze Saint Peter just within, and, going up the central aisle, knelt at the rail at the foot of the high altar.

Around him, the place was very still. Far in some distant corner, he could hear a faint echo of steps; but at last the steps were heard no more, and the chapel lay in an absolute hush of peace. Little by little and by slow degrees the hush of peace came over Leleu's tired senses. He had exhausted, for the time being, his power for active suffering. In the torpor which followed, his mind went back again over the old happy, carefree days when that chapel and the Seminary beyond had been a home to him. Life had been bright to him then, full of promise, fuller still of dreams. And now, over a present which might have been brighter than any boyish dreams, the shadows had dropped and dimmed the lustre. And the fault?

He bowed his head still lower. As yet, it was impossible for him to see on whose side the fault lay. The battle was too near, the wound too fresh. Only time could give him the proper perspective; but time would allow the wound to heal into an ugly scar above the distorted flesh. Better than that would be the firm touch of another hand

upon the hurt. No matter how agonizing now, it might be helpful in the end. Rising, he moved to the altar at the right, and bowed again before the shrine of the all-pitiful Sainte Anne.

Then, when the morning was far spent, white and wan, but steadfast in his purpose, he once more rose from his knees and left the dim-arched chapel. He was conscious of but one purpose only; and that purpose was the finding of his uncle, the venerable Père Leleu.

And Père Leleu heard him to the end, the end of the story, and self-blame, and final question. Then he turned and faced his nephew with dark, lambent eyes which burnt their way into the soul of Amédée Leleu.

"And still you love your wife?" he asked slowly.

Leleu bowed his head.

"As I love my hope of paradise," he said, and his voice was full of reverence.

Père Leleu's face cleared. His eyes lost their sombre flame.

"It is well. That was your marriage vow, and no Leleu ever was false to the vows of his marriage. And now you ask my advice. There is one course open to you, Amédée, one course and only one. Go home to your wife. Tell her your love. Show it to her freely and every day. Give her no chance to forget it; surround her life with it until it leaves place for nothing else. Of the past and of whose the fault, what matter? The future is still in your hands, the future of your wife, of your child, of your love. Go home, then, Amédée, go home swiftly and see that you hold it yours, now and for the life to come." And, lifting one hand as if in benediction, with the other, slowly, reverently, he made the sign of the cross.

The noonday bell was ringing, as Leleu crossed the ancient market place and turned his steps once more towards the Clarendon. Swiftly he passed the office,

swiftly ran up the familiar stairs. Outside his own door, he halted, drew his hand across his brow, his eyes, and swallowed hard for an instant. Then softly he turned the knob and entered the room where Arline lay on the couch just as she had lain, only the night before. The dark shadows beneath her closed eyes intensified the whiteness of her cheeks; her short, sharp breathing alone betrayed the fact that she was alert to every sound which betokened his coming.

Leleu never hesitated. For him, the hour for hesitation had ended when he had left the Seminary chapel. Now he crossed the intervening bit of floor, knelt beside the couch and gathered his wife in his arms, while he laid his brown cheek against her own.

"Arline," he said brokenly; "I too was wrong, and I am sorry. But the past is gone. Shall we forget it, dear, like some ugly dream, and wait for the future, side by side and with good courage?"

There was no need for him to hold his breath, awaiting the spoken reply. Arline's whole body had yielded to the first touch of his clasping arms, her head had nestled against him and he felt her tears dropping fast upon his fingers and even upon his swarthy cheek.

CHAPTER TWENTY

OVER the grassy stretch of the Esplanade, the June sun lay warm. The gray wall was bathed in sunshine and the tower of the Kent Gate cast a sharp shadow across the turf. On the benches at the northern end, a trio of gray-gowned, black-bonneted nurses alternately gossiped and made little relief expeditions after their toddling charges who seemed bent upon committing suicide under the cars rounding the corner out of Anne Street. Farther to the south of the little park, a squad of infantry from the citadel close by, went through an elaborate drill, with a listless indifference born of the summer day and of their consciousness of the admiring eyes of the dozen American tourists who had climbed the stairs of the Louis Gate and were squatting like doves on the top of the city wall.

"Do you know," Jimmy Lord observed; "it's a curious and significant fact that the country which sends us the most tourists should also have invented the choice, but expressive word *stunts*. It never would have occurred to me to get on top of that wall; but neither would I have had the initiative to write my name and address on the rail of the Wolfe-Montcalm monument, or even to take a midwinter drive in a calèche."

Leleu smiled.

"They are a strange race, those Americans."

But Jimmy disagreed.

"Not all," he answered, with a crisp brevity which caused Leleu's eyes to widen with surprise. "Miss Tyler is an American, you know."

Leleu took refuge in epigram.

"There is no nationality among the angels," he said.

And Jimmy laughed, partly in understanding, partly in agreement, partly in pleasure at the old mood of content which, day by day, was once more taking hold upon Leleu. To them all, little by little, the past winter was turning to a vague memory, as of some disordered dream. Many things had contributed to this blotting out of a grim page in all their lives, and those things had followed one another in swiftest succession. Leleu and Arline had not yet finished talking of their plans for their reconstructed life, when news had come to them that St. Just, hastily summoned back to Paris, had left for Halifax on the very afternoon of the day which had brought the summons. Then, for three swift, hurrying weeks, Leleu had divided his time between the Parliament Buildings, Arline, and the house he had bought on the Esplanade. To Arline, he explained that his increasing duties would make it needful that he should live nearer his office. To himself, he admitted frankly that he could not bring himself to spend one unnecessary hour in the familiar rooms at the Clarendon. Not even the sight of Arline, gentler than of yore, more considerate and infinitely more loving, could quite blot out the memory of the long agonies he had suffered, within those bright and cheery walls. It was with a look of ineffable content that, one morning in late March, Leleu had led his wife up the steps and into the spacious home which he had chosen and decked out for her coming.

Four days later, the Government had fallen. The game of the provincial crisis had played itself out to an inglorious end, had filed itself away to wait for the judgment of history. For two long weeks, Leleu had sat in a temporary cabinet, giving what help he could to the leader who was quietly arranging all things in readiness for his

own end. The position had not been a glorious one ; it was open to some ridicule, much blame. Nevertheless, Leleu, in his seat on the day after the resignation of the premier, listening to the tribute paid by the leader of the Opposition to those few members who had been loyal to the leaders to whose support they were pledged, listening to this, Leleu had felt that he had gained a rich reward. The prizes of the winning side were not for him ; but at least he could return to his county, clean-handed, level-eyed. The rest would be but a matter of time.

For Leleu, then, hard on the heels of his domestic reconstruction had come his political one. In both of these, the *Cartier* had taken no mean share. From the Carolina pine belt and at the hazard of his life, the chief had come dashing northward as fast as trains could bear him. Quebec still talked of the two-column editorial in the extra which had announced his arrival. Sir Morris, meanwhile, had never mentioned the long hour he had loitered in the station, awaiting the departure of the train for Halifax, nor of the contented smile which had illumined his face when the train, with Achille St. Just on board, had finally steamed away.

All that had been in March, and now late June had come, and summer was upon the land. From end to end of the house on the Esplanade, the windows stood wide open to the breeze, and the sun lay warm over the roadway and over the stretches of grass beyond.

Jimmy and Leleu were sitting in the open windows looking out upon the street. At each man's elbow was a heaped-up ash tray, and the heaps held a number of matches wholly disproportionate to the ashes beside them. They talked disjointedly, with forced interest and stilted phrases ; and, every now and then, Leleu interrupted the talk while he crossed the floor, softly opened the door into the hall and, holding up his hand for silence, bowed his

head in intent listening. Then, closing the door with the same elaborate care, he shook his head and returned to his seat and to his conversation. And, with the dragging hours, the conversation dragged ever more heavily, while the sun dropped behind the tower on the Parliament Buildings, then behind the roof, and then behind the city wall, heavy and gray as the twilight shadows which crept across the greensward of the Esplanade.

And then, all at once and without warning, it seemed to the two men that the atmosphere of the house grew tense with some impending crisis. The tension grew, holding them both silent, listening. There came the stir of hurrying footsteps, the low murmur of voices. There came another silence, longer than the first had been. Then, faint with distance, but lusty with new-born life, there came floating down to them the sound of a high-pitched baby cry.

The pompous old English doctor, marching solemnly down the stairs to acquaint the waiting father with the news, became wellnigh speechless with indignation to find himself brushed aside as Leleu, lithe as a cat and beaming with happiness, went springing up the stairs. Then, as he met the eye of Jimmy, waiting in the hall below, his irate pomposity lost itself in an indulgent chuckle.

"They 're all alike, English or French, over their first baby," he remarked, as he followed Jimmy through the rooms on his way to the sideboard.

Jimmy drew a long breath. Then he laughed.

"I've had a day I'll never forget. Leleu has had no idea of being difficult; but he's been like a caged tiger. Is everything all right?"

The doctor nodded into his glass.

"Admirable, Mr. Lord, admirable."

"And Arline?"

"Admirable. Your sister's constitution, you know."

"I know. I was only afraid she might have overdone, last winter."

The doctor shook his shining poll.

"I assure you, Mr. Lord, I have never seen a case where all the conditions were more entirely satisfactory."

Half an hour later, Jimmy, seated alone by the open window, looked up alertly, as Patience Tyler came into the room. The girl was pale, and her weariness would have been obvious to eyes far less searching than were those of Jimmy Lord; but her voice broke gayly in upon Jimmy's twilight musings.

"My congratulations to you, Uncle Jimmy!" she said blithely.

He sprang to his feet, whisked the ash trays out of sight and rolled forward the easiest chair which the room afforded. Patience nodded her thanks, then sat down on the chair arm, with her clasped hands falling into the lap of her soft, thin gown.

"Do you feel the stimulus of your new dignity?" she demanded then.

"Not so much as I shall, when I've seen it."

"It!" Patience echoed, in swift rebuke. "I thought better of you than that."

Jimmy gave a shamefaced laugh.

"Do you know," he confessed; "I was so glad to get Leleu safely off my hands, without his breaking anything, or setting fire to anything, that I really quite forgot to ask the doctor whether the little chap was a boy or a girl."

"The little chap is a girl," Patience assured him gravely. "Furthermore, she has a puggy nose, and eyes just like Arline's." Her tone was carefree. However, she rose to her feet and began to move restlessly to and fro about the room, changing the place of an ornament here, straightening a book there.

Jimmy watched her uneasily. He took note of her

nervous gestures, of the shadows that lay beneath her eyes. Then he said bluntly, —

“Oh, I say, you’re quite tired out with this thing.”

“Thing?” She smiled faintly, as she lifted her brows in rebuke. Nevertheless, something in his tone had brought the quick tears to her eyes.

Jimmy rose and stood beside her, his tall, lean figure towering above her in brotherly protection.

“No matter what you call it. Angel, if you choose. That does n’t affect the main point: that you’ve been shut up in this house, all day long. Come out for a breath of air.”

“But they may need me,” the girl protested weakly.

“Then let them go on needing. There’s the nurse and the doctor and Leleu, to say nothing of Molly at the other end of a telephone wire. Molly is a darling; I’ve always said so. Still, she need n’t shirk.”

“But Arline did n’t want her,” Patience said defensively.

Jimmy laughed.

“Arline did n’t want you; but you insisted. Stop arguing, Miss Tyler, and get your hat. I’m fagged out, myself.”

Patience echoed his laugh.

“I suspect it has been a strenuous day for you,” she observed.

“I should rather say it had. I like Leleu; he’s a good fellow. Still, on an occasion like this, I prefer to deal with a stoical Briton. The fiery Gaul is a bit too inflammable. It has been a whole Dominion Day celebration for me, with somewhat of your Fourth of July thrown in for good measure. Do you happen to remember, Miss Tyler, that I invited you to come for a walk?”

The darkness had nearly fallen when Patience and Jimmy, leaving the crowded terrace, turned into the

shadowy silence of the Governor's Garden. As they neared the steps of her home, Patience drew a tired little sigh.

"I have kept you out too long," Jimmy rebuked himself instantly.

"No; it was better for me. Truly, I was n't tired in that way," Patience demurred; but not all of Jimmy's urging could prevail upon her to speak of the scenes through which she had passed, during those last days with Arline.

Jimmy had some faint inkling of them, however, and to them his next words had reference.

"No matter now," he said hopefully. "I believe all our bad times are ended."

But Patience shook her head. Then she spoke with a dreary depression for which her weariness alone was not sufficient to account.

"I hope so," she echoed sadly. "Still, for Mr. Leleu, I am a little bit afraid."

Her words came back to Jimmy, the next noon, when, in answer to an imperative summons on the telephone, he was walking rapidly along the Esplanade. Why should Arline, weak as she was, and never too demonstratively attached to the members of her own family, why should she have sent for him in such hot haste?

To Jimmy, alert and full of vigour and fresh from the sunny streets, Arline, lying there in the midst of her white draperies in the dim, cool room, looked alarmingly pale and wan, as she held out an eager hand to greet his coming. The great, tender-hearted fellow was conscious of a sudden drawing at his throat, though he smiled bravely down into her wide violet eyes, while he settled himself on the edge of the bed and took her hot hand in his. After all, she was his sister, and weak withal. Moreover, in passing through one of the mysterious crises of her life,

she had wandered close to the borders of The Unknown. His slim, strong fingers closed over her restless ones.

"It is rather jolly, Arline; isn't it?" he said, in a comfortable, quiet voice which should have worked like balm upon her nerves.

Instead, she gave an excited little laugh.

"I hope so. It remains to be seen."

Jimmy looked at her in swift alarm.

"But you're better, Arline?"

"Oh, yes. I am better. There is never any fear for me."

"And the baby is strong?"

"Strong, yes." There was a slight stress upon the adjective. Then she glanced to the window where the nurse sat holding the square little bundle of flannel and flesh that goes to make up a baby. "Have you seen your new niece, Jimmy?"

"Not yet. I came to see you; she'll keep," Jimmy responded tranquilly. But he rose and crossed to the window. "She's — she's a beauty," he said bravely, when the nurse had opened a crack in the outer layers of flannel and permitted him to peer in at the red and wrinkled visage of the new member of the family. "I—I fancy she looks like you both."

Arline laughed weakly.

"Well done, Jimmy! You have said all the decent things. Now take her away, nurse. I want to see my brother alone. Yes, go," she added imperiously. "It won't hurt me, and I have something I must say to him alone."

Jimmy looked at the nurse. Then he eyed Arline dubiously.

"Won't it keep, Arline? I can come again."

She caught at a fold of his clothing, while the scarlet flush rose in her cheeks.

"No ; it must be now, Jimmy. I must talk. It won't hurt me. Has the nurse gone? Then sit down here, close, closer, so I can talk without the others hearing. You are sure there is no one in the room?"

Jimmy glanced over his shoulder, in a futile hope that the nurse was still within hearing. Arline's flush and the glitter in her eyes made him uneasy. The door had closed upon the nurse, however, and the brother and sister were quite alone.

"Steady, Arline," he cautioned her. "Don't excite yourself, girl. You are not too strong yet, you know."

Her other hand shut on his arm, drawing him yet closer to her side.

"I'm strong enough, Jimmy. I could n't rest till I had seen you. I tried to talk to Patience, yesterday ; but she was no use. She is so cold and hard and conventional that I might have known she would n't help me out. But you — you're all that is left to me, Jimmy."

Jimmy looked startled.

"What about Leleu?" he demanded anxiously.

She amended her phrase.

"All of my own kind and kin, I mean. At a time like this, one needs her own people. Jimmy, you have always been so good to me."

"I hope so, dear," he assented soothingly, for Arline, lifted on her elbow, was growing more excited with each passing moment.

"You have, better than I knew, even. I know it now. I appreciate it. I wonder if you remember, Jimmy," she lay back again, nestling her cheek against their clasped hands ; "remember the day after I was engaged. You told me then that, if I would make up my mind where I stood and honestly stick to my mind, you would stand with me, wherever it was. Do you remember?"

He did remember only too well. The memory lent a touch of tragedy to his brief assent.

"Yes, Arline, I do remember."

Her clutch on his hand grew tighter.

"And will you say it again?"

"What is it you want, Arline?"

She burst into tears, as a child might have done.

"You won't! You are so hard, Jimmy! And I trusted you!"

"What is it, dear?" he asked again.

"Will you promise?" she urged swiftly.

"Promise what?"

"That you will be loyal to me, loyal for the sake of our father?"

Jimmy bowed his head.

"Yes, Arline."

She shut both hands on his upper arm and drew him towards her with a nervous force which he was powerless to withstand.

"Come close, then. I must whisper. Some one might hear," she said feverishly. "Put your ear down where I can whisper into it."

He obeyed. Her hot breath swept his cheek, her burning words filled his ear. For an instant, listening, he held himself in rigid wonder. Then he drew back; but his physical recoil was as nothing in comparison with his moral one.

"Arline, for shame!" he said aloud, heedless of her weakened condition.

"But why?"

"Your promise to Leleu."

"When?"

Jimmy rose and stood facing her, white and still and determined. It was plain that Arline had struck a blow at his whole sense of manly honour.

"When you signed your marriage contracts."

"I was forced into them," she whimpered weakly.

"No one forced you, Arline. In any case, you signed them; you are bound by them." Low and steady, Jimmy's words fell across the silent room.

Twisting her arms above her face, she burst into an agony of weeping.

"What if I did? I was only a girl; I had no notion what they meant. I had no notion what it would mean to have my child, my baby daughter, baptized into the Catholic church. Jimmy, I won't! It's cruel! You promised to help me, promised in our father's name."

Jimmy went white.

"Arline, it would be an insult to the dear old pater's memory, if I helped you turn traitor in this thing. You gave your word, two years ago, that the child should be brought up Catholic. You chose your course; you must walk in the course you have chosen. I promised Leleu, only last night, that I would be godfather to his child. He asked me, Protestant as I am, as the greatest honour he could pay his wife. And now," Jimmy bit his lip; "now you are asking me, without your husband's knowledge, to smuggle the Dean into this house, to-day, to baptize your baby." He swung about on his heel. Then he checked himself. "Arline," he added slowly; "I am a Protestant, Protestant in birth and training and of my choice. Still, I confess that, now and then, the Catholic seems to me to have the nobler sense of loyalty."

She checked her sobs and looked up at him in swift antagonism. Then the old, hard edge came into her voice.

"I fail to see the loyalty," she said, with slow, tense bitterness. "The game is all for him. I am here, weak, helpless. No one will come to my rescue. He, strong and well, can make his plans and carry them out to suit

himself. And you talk of loyalty ! And I must lie here and see my little child, my baby, snatched away from my arms and thrown into the maelstrom of Catholicism. Jimmy !”

But the door had opened upon the nurse, and Jimmy, with an appealing look at the woman, had escaped from the room and from the house.

Less than a week later, they gathered at the rail of the high altar, Amédée Leleu and his baby girl, and the sponsors, Jimmy Lord and Madame Aucune. Clustered in the nearer pews sat and knelt the others : the friends and kinsmen of Leleu ; and the Brooke Lords and Patience and her brother and Sir Morris Plante. And baby Agatha, dressed in the christening robe which had served for seven generations of Leleus, stared out upon it all with vague and wondering eyes. It was a soft, gray day of summer rain, and the upper arches of the Basilica lost themselves in dim shadows, while the candles on the high altar tipped themselves with wavering points of yellow light, as the breeze crept in upon them from some far-off open door. It was all so huge and still and solemn, under the dusky arches bending above the tiny being now to be taken into the protecting care of the mother church. And the child, heedless of the solemn rite, lay and babbled softly to herself about the land whence she had so lately come.

And the service went its course : the salt, the laying on of the stole, the exorcism and the anointing. And at last Père Leleu, white-haired and venerable and carrying in his face the love of little children, bent over the baby for an instant, before offering the burning light of faith to the waiting sponsors. The wrinkled old face was infinitely gentle, yet sad withal, for there had rushed back upon him, as he stood there, the memory of his talk with Leleu upon the gallery, that bright midwinter morning. And

Amédée was his favourite nephew, and this was Amédée's own child. Père Leleu's white head bent even lower in a swift prayer that all might be well with the life of the baby girl.

Then of a sudden he lifted his head, and his face broke into a smile. Wriggling uneasily in the motherly arms of Madame Aucune, the baby had freed one little arm from the enfolding blanket and, an instant later, Père Leleu had felt his hand, the hand which bore the burning candle of faith, held in the soft, unconscious grasp of the tiny baby fingers. Then once more he bowed his head, and his thin old voice broke a little over the final solemn words, —

“Vade in pace, et Dominus sit tecum.”

And meanwhile, in the upper room of the house on the Esplanade, the nurse was bending above Arline who, since early morning, had been muttering to herself and tossing to and fro in wild delirium.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“YES,” Patience assented ; “ she really is better.”

“ And out of all danger ? ”

“ At last,” she assented again.

“ I am glad,” Sir Morris answered. “ It ’s been an awful time for Leleu, and I suppose, for a few days, there was some risk.”

“ For her mind, you mean ? ”

Sir Morris nodded.

“ Yes. At least, Jimmy said so,” he replied a little apologetically.

“ Oh, if they speak of it. I didn’t know, and some people are so reticent about illness. Yes, for a few days, the chances were less than even ; but yesterday the doctor said the danger was past and gone.”

“ It ’s a good hearing,” Sir Morris said cheerfully. “ Poor Leleu has had a bad time of it, the past few months. Let ’s hope it is all over now. And he says, Jimmy, I mean, that you ’ve been devoted to Arline, these last days.”

Patience shook her head.

“ There was so little I could do,” she demurred.

Sir Morris’s clean blue eyes swept her tired face.

“ That ’s not what Jimmy said,” he answered.

Patience smiled ; then she waited for him to come up the steps.

“ But aren’t you going in ? ” she asked, as he halted beside her at the top.

"What's the use? You have just brought out the latest bulletin."

"I know; but they'd be glad to know you had called."

Sir Morris faced about and led the way down the steps.

"If that's all, I can telephone Lelen," he responded.

"I'd rather do that than stand talking with the servants in the hall. Which way are you going?"

"Home," Patience responded briefly.

Sir Morris glanced up at the sun, over his shoulder at the khaki-coloured line of soldiers drawn up against the gray city wall. Then he made deliberate answer, —

"Oh, I would n't; at least, not directly."

Patience laughed.

"Do you refer to time or space?" she queried, with a touch of her old-time humour. "So far as I have seen, there's not a direct road inside the city wall."

Sir Morris stuck his hands, stick and all, into his pockets and swung into step at her side.

"That's the Canadian of it," he observed. "They are a race of infinite leisure, Miss Tyler."

She raised her brows inquiringly.

"And you?"

"Oh, I don't count; but my people are busy. My brothers are always in a great row about something or other. They are younger than I, you know."

"How many are there of you?" Patience asked, as they turned down Saint Louis Street.

Curiously enough, it had never occurred to her, until that moment, to give a thought to the absent family of Sir Morris Plante. That he was well-born and made of a metal which rang true, she had discerned at the outset of their acquaintance. At that time, inquiries would have smacked of gossipful impertinence. Later, as she had come to know Sir Morris better, his personality had

seemed to her enough in itself. There was no particular need of asking him to account for it.

"There are four of us," Sir Morris answered. "Two are in the university — Oxford — and one is at Eton. I've a young sister, too. She'll come out, next year, be presented and all that. The mater — she is second wife, and not the mother of any of us — is almost as young as my sister. I don't mean in years; but they go in for the same sort of thing."

"And your father?" Patience queried.

Sir Morris's eyes, fixed on the tall end door of the Péan house across the way, clouded heavily.

"The poor old pater! He had a hunting accident, and — and he does n't know us any longer. It's awful to see him, just like a baby. He has an old servant, John, the groom who was with him when he fell; and John breathes for him, feeds him, dresses him, carries him around in his arms. And, once on a time, the pater was no end of a man, keen on hunting and politics and doing translations of Horace." And, quite without sense of shame, Sir Morris rubbed his hand across his eyes.

"I am sorry, Sir Morris," Patience told him slowly; "sorriest of all that I have made you talk about it."

"Oh; but it's better," he reassured her. "Nobody else here knows it, and it's a bit lonely, now and then, thinking about it when I'm all by myself. It's rather good to speak of it; it makes them seem not quite so far off, you see."

Patience smiled a little.

"Then you do get homesick, after all, Sir Morris?"

"Not homesick, only anxious," he corrected her. "There's no especial comfort in being at home. My father and I were friends — one's father is n't always, you know — and, now that he does n't know me, I'm best off where I don't see him. He gets excited, when

people are in the room." Sir Morris bit his lip. "You see, it was a five-barred gate, and the horse took it too soon and fell on him. It broke some bones; but the real trouble was all from the shock to the brain."

They had almost reached the corner of Haldimand Hill, and Sir Morris's step hesitated irresolutely. Patience, however, glanced up at his face, and she hesitated not at all. It was plain to her that the great, jovial, boyish Englishman had troubles of his own, and that her chance word had brought those troubles uppermost in his mind. Under such conditions, it seemed to her a bit unfair that she should leave him to go on alone, and think those troubles back into their usual lurking-places of his consciousness. She faced about and turned into Du Parloir Street.

"Come," she said; "it really is too good a morning to spend in the house. Shall we go for a walk?"

His face cleared a little, and he kept on at her side, past the Ursuline Convent, past the side of the Cathedral close; then, turning to the left, they came out to the Grand Battery. At their feet, the old city lay warm in the bright June sun; from countless chimneys in the town beneath, tall lines of smoke rose straight across the windless sky, and beyond it all the Beauport flats stretched away and away, a level sheet of shining green. And, beside them, the close rank of aged guns poked their black, impotent noses over the crest of the ancient wall.

It was long before Sir Morris broke the silence. When at last he spoke, it was with his eyes fixed upon the ocean steamer that lay in mid-channel, far below.

"I think perhaps I ought to go home soon," he said.

Turning, Patience stared at him with startled eyes. It had not occurred to her that their pleasant quartette could be broken.

"To stay?" she asked.

"I — am not sure." The gap in his words was measured to the length of one steady look into her level eyes. "I'd like to see the pater once more for myself. Of course, the mater writes ; but — it's different, you know. And, in case things happened, it takes so long to get there."

Patience dropped her eyes. Miss her good comrade as she would, she yet felt that Sir Morris was right.

"Yes," she assented. "I think that you ought to go."

He drew in his breath, slowly and to its fullest depth. Then he let it go again with a rush.

"About my coming back," he added ; "that's another matter. I'm not needed there now, and I like it here. Of course, later, I shall have to go. In the meantime —"

"Well?" Patience reminded him, after a pause.

He glanced at the group of students coming up the hill.

"Do you mind, if we come in here?" he asked abruptly.

Patience hesitated. Then she yielded to a new Sir Morris whom she had never known till then, a Sir Morris kindly as of old, but infinitely more virile, infinitely more dominant. His clear blue eyes were steely hard, his lips shaped to a resolute line, his whole bearing grave and full of dignity.

Side by side, they turned in at the gate in the old gray wall, followed the board walk past the long front of Laval, wound in and out among the buildings and then, with a sharp turn to the left, came out into a wide, open courtyard. The ground beneath their feet was bare and brown and hard trodden as an asphalt floor. Around them, the court was walled in with the high, white buildings of the Seminary, gabled above, and pierced with a triple rank of narrow casements below. On one side, a low archway gave exit to the outer world ; on the other, a broad, square flight of steps led to a panelled door. And on the wall, high above the doorway, an ancient dial marked the passing hours ; and on the dial, the letters standing out sharply

from the old white wall, were the words *Nostra Dies quasi Umbra*.

"I love it here," Sir Morris said simply. "It is so quiet, you know."

Patience stood for a moment, glancing about her, at the deserted court, at the high white walls, at the dial with its moving point of shade.

"No wonder you love it," she answered then. "I was never here before."

His face lighted.

"I am glad. I supposed you knew it. It is one of my favourite haunts. I come here often, when it's warm, and sit on the bench there under the tree. Shall we do it now?" And Patience was at a loss to understand the note of eagerness in his voice, as he pointed to the seat beneath the single ancient tree growing in the exact centre of the court. "Shall we sit down here?" he said again.

Seated, their faces turned to the dial graven on the wall, an unaccountable silence fell upon them both. Sir Morris apparently was lost in thought, his face intent, his lips pressed hard together. As for Patience, she was giving herself over to the perfect quiet of the place and hour. Even upon her young strength, the past few days had told acutely. Arline, nervous and captious, refusing to see Mrs. Brooke Lord, had clung to Patience with an insistent eagerness which took no thought of any exhaustion on the part of the girl. And Patience had given recklessly of her time and strength. Arline, just then, was passing through the crisis of her life. Small wonder that she longed for the presence of another woman of her own age and class! Nevertheless, Patience found it good to turn her back upon the fretting and bickering, upon the frenzied hatred of the baptismal rite and on the consequent madness of fever, to forget it all and sit there in silent, passive

enjoyment of the shadow moving along the old white wall, of the summer breeze whispering in the tree above their heads. It was all so old, so peaceful, so full of rest.

"Miss Tyler."

She roused herself and faced Sir Morris. The young Englishman was bending forward, his elbows on his knees, his true blue eyes fixed steadily upon her own. Of a sudden, an unaccountable fear took hold of the girl, a terror of the coming words and of the look they would be bound to bring into the honest, earnest face before her.

"What is it?" she asked faintly.

His eyes held hers for a moment. Then he said, —

"I think you know, already. I'm not much good at words, Miss Tyler; I can't seem to say things as I'd like to; but — why, it's just like this. I love you." As he spoke, he lifted his small gray cap from its place on his yellow hair. "Love you as I never thought it was in a man to love a woman. I don't know when it began, nor why; I don't even know that you could ever get to care for me; but — I wish you could. I'm not much, I know; but I honestly think I could make you happy, if you'd only let me try."

At his first words, Patience had cast upon him one glance of piteous appeal. Then she dropped her eyes to the hard-packed ground at her feet, while she shut her right hand over a fold of her skirt. And, in the hush that followed, the point of shadow crept slowly along the ancient dial, and a heavy wall of shadow rolled slowly forward along the old white wall.

"Will you let me try?" Sir Morris repeated then.

Patience bit her lip. It seemed to her that she could never send the shadow into those honest, earnest eyes which now were seeking in vain to meet her own. Neither could she give him that for which he was asking. Months ago, Sir Morris's words, spoken on the slide, had cut

sharply across their pleasant friendship. They had been unannounced and, at least to Patience, wholly unexpected. For a time, both had been fully conscious of the scar they had made. Then the memory had vanished, and the old happy relation between them had resumed its former course. Patience had supposed that, henceforth, it would remain unbroken. And now, in the stillness and the peace of the old courtyard, gently and with obvious self-doubtings, Sir Morris had once more made the rupture. And she liked Sir Morris absolutely; her life would be incomplete without his jovial friendship. The two heavy tears that dropped to the hard brown earth were not alone for Sir Morris Plante. Sorry as she was for him, Patience yet pitied herself acutely.

"Of course, I'm not clever like you," he was urging. "I've not so much to offer you, I know. And yet, I believe, if you'd let me try it, I could make you happy. We would n't need to live in England, you know. If you chose to stay out here to be near your brother, I could arrange it in some way. Of course, we'd go over to England now and then. You'd like the mater, and you would want to be presented and to go about among my people."

The gravity of his face had given place to a little smile. He was, for the moment, like a child who tells itself a fairy tale where every man is king and every woman queen. Strange to say, his happiness brought to the heart of Patience a keener stab than that wrought by his pleading of a moment before. If the dream could give him such content, what would the reality yield? Two more tears fell on the brown earth. Then, turning, she laid on his a hand which of a sudden had grown icy cold.

"I am sorry," she said slowly. "I wish—but it is quite impossible."

He went white to the lips; but his eyes never wavered.

"Do you mean you could never get to love me?" he asked slowly.

"Never," she echoed still more slowly.

"I—I am sorry. I had hoped for it. It meant so much to me. And you think it's no use?"

She shook her head.

"None."

Slowly, slowly the shadow crept along the dial, crept along the old white wall beneath. At last Sir Morris raised his head.

"It would have been so good," he said slowly. "But, at least, I'm glad I've known you. It's something for a man, nowadays, to have known one loyal, true-hearted woman. It makes him look on all women with kinder eyes." Then he rose to his feet and, turning, looked down at her bowed head. "Don't mind, Miss Tyler," he said manfully, but with an accent of infinite sadness. "It has n't been your fault. I think I'll go to England for a little while. When I come back, perhaps, we can forget all this and be good friends once more, just as we always have been."

And Patience raised her head and answered steadily, although with quivering lips,—

"I wish it might have been, Sir Morris; but—it could n't. But, at least, I never tried to make you care like this."

"No," he assented honestly. "No; you never did." There came a little pause. Then he held out his hand. "Come," he said gently. "Shall we be going home?"

As Patience rose to her feet, she lifted her eyes to the opposite wall. A heavy cloud had drifted across the sun, and its shadow, resting upon the ancient dial, had blotted out the finger point of time.

Sir Morris went with Patience as far as her own

door. Then, turning away, he rounded the corner and tramped steadily off for weary miles out on the Cap Rouge road.

Jimmy and Stanwood were smoking in the library, when Patience came into the room. At the sound of her hurried, nervous steps on the stairs outside, both men had ceased from talking, and Jimmy, lounging in the open window behind the full, soft curtains, was quite invisible. She opened the door, halted, irresolute, for a moment, then crossed the room to Stanwood's side.

"What is it, Pat?" he asked her.

"Oh, Stanwood!"

The girl had held herself steady during the short walk towards home. She had gone through the parting bravely. Now, however, the reaction had come. Safe at home and with her brother's strong arm around her, she could cry to her heart's content.

"What is it, dear? Is Arline worse?"

She shook her head, trying, the while, to choke back her sobs.

"No," she said at last. "It's not Arline. It's—Sir Morris."

"Is he ill? Hurt?" His arms still around her, Stanwood Tyler half rose to his feet.

"No; I've only hurt him so. It was in the Seminary court, and he sails, next week."

With his disengaged hand, Stanwood Tyler made an imperious gesture for silence towards the open window. He understood his sister's viewpoint well enough to be sure she would never forgive herself, if she knew of her involuntary betrayal of Sir Morris. Jimmy, hidden in the window, must hold his peace. Later, he could be sworn to silence. For the present, Patience was the first care. Worn out in body and nerve by her long attendance upon Arline, the girl's blithe poise appeared to have given way

completely. In all his life, Stanwood Tyler had never seen his sister cry as she was crying now.

Gently he passed his arm about her shoulders.

"You are so tired, Patsy, utterly tired out. This fussing over Arline has been too much for you, without any other worries —"

But she interrupted him.

"Sir Morris did n't worry me, Stan; he was superb, so kind and gentle, so generous to see my side. It was only that — I could n't."

The last words came with a sob, and her head fell over against his shoulder.

Above the top of her head, Stanwood sent a warning glance at the curtains which were moving uneasily, as if in sympathy with the discomfort suffered by the man hidden within their folds. For the moment, both men were cursing the fate which had sent Jimmy into the deep embrasure of the window, just as Patience had come up the stairs. Then Stanwood's arm tightened about his sister.

"Don't mind, dear. We all have to take our bad half-hours. I'm sorry about Sir Morris. He is a good fellow; he might have made you happy, if you had cared for him. Still, I'm not ready to give you up, Patsy. Don't cry, dear. Come into your room and lie down. You're quite used up."

But she lifted her head and drew back, shuddering as if the thought of solitude were terrifying to her.

"No; I can't. I don't want to rest. Truly, Stan, I'm not so tired. It is only that I never expected it — all this, and it has upset me just a little." Then she steadied herself. "We shall miss Sir Morris," she added wishfully.

"He is going to England?" Stanwood asked her.

"Yes. I have sent him away." Again there came the falling cadence to her words.

Heedless now of the silent listener, Stanwood faced about.

"Patsy," he said a little sternly; "it's not too late to change your mind. If you have made a mistake now, for God's sake, don't allow any false notions of modesty to keep you from taking it back."

She straightened at his words and faced him bravely, albeit with no hint of defiance.

"There's no mistake, Stanwood. A year ago, even, there might have been; but not now. Sir Morris is like a dear old cousin. I care for him, and I shall miss him; but it's not the way you mean. Sir Morris Plante is one of the noblest men I've ever known; but he's not the only one, nor yet the noblest of them all."

For an instant, Stanwood Tyler's face showed his relief.

"Then there is some one else, Pat?" he asked, almost involuntarily.

For another instant, she looked at him in silence. Then she bowed her head.

"I am not sure." Then she looked up at him again, and her eyes were pleading. "Stanwood," she said; "forget all this. I had no right to tell you; it was not fair to Sir Morris. I had supposed my nerve was better; but—I rather think I was a little tired. Forget it, dear, and never speak of it again." She smiled a little wanly. "You know we women never like to be reminded of the day when we have lost our poise." And, turning, she went away into her own room.

With a swift step, her brother crossed the floor, drew aside the curtain and pointed to the door. Jimmy, white to the lips, came out from his corner and, stern and unsmiling, shook his head.

"No," he said softly. "It is too late for that now, Tyler. I must stop and face it out."

But Stanwood realized the unspoken meaning of his words.

"Not now," he urged. "She is tired and off her nerve. Best wait."

"I could n't," Jimmy made brief reply. "I should feel all kinds of a sneak. But at least," he looked up at Stanwood a bit appealingly; "if things go wrong, you'll tell her I never meant to listen."

Stanwood nodded. Then, with the wishful, boyish words still sounding in his ears, he turned away and left Jimmy standing there alone.

It was a long quarter of an hour, before Patience came out of her room. As she crossed the threshold, her straightforward glance wavered, for it was Jimmy Lord, not Stanwood, who stepped forward to meet her, and Jimmy's eyes were compelling.

Without delay, he rushed upon his fate.

"I was here. I heard," he said abruptly.

"You!" The scarlet blood rolled up across her cheeks. "You listening! That was not like you, Mr. Lord."

"I hope not," he assented humbly. "It was all an accident. I was behind the curtain, there by the window, when you came into the room. Before I could get out, you had gone so far that I dared not show myself."

She bit her lip.

"But you show yourself now," she reminded him.

Jimmy reddened. Then he made quiet answer, —

"That's not a fair thrust, Miss Tyler. Perhaps I was wrong to stay there; but I had no time to think it over, and I hated to have you see me walk out, when you were so upset. Of course, whatever comes, you can count on my keeping still. Even if I had no honour of my own, I like Sir Morris too well to tell of his bad times."

The girl lifted her eyes to his.

"Thank you," she said, with perfect quiet. "I believe

you, Mr. Lord. Please forgive my bad temper. I was wholly wrong."

He brushed her apology aside as a thing of no import.

"Wait," he said. "I'm not done yet; there's more to tell, more to ask. When you had gone, your brother urged me to go away. I could n't. It was better you should know at once that I had heard than that you should find it out, later on. It was better that I should wait and tell you, myself. And then —"

At the pause, she raised her eyes once more. The annoyance had left her face, and the grief. In their place had come a mood of quiet waiting. Jimmy looked down at her, took a swift step forward, then checked himself.

"I heard much, heard more than I ought," he said steadily. "It left me wondering more. I'm not the noblest man that ever lived. Sir Morris is a better, truer fellow than I can ever hope to be; but you told your brother that — there — was some one — else."

The last words came hesitatingly and with long pauses between. For a moment, his eyes held hers. Then she turned away.

"I said I was not sure," she corrected him, for she felt her hour was come and, like a true and fearless woman, she was finding it hard to surrender.

"It amounts to the same thing," he said impatiently. "Don't fence with me, Patience. It has gone too far for that."

She glanced up sharply at his use of her name, albeit the sound was sweet upon her ears. He caught her glance, held it, and went on insistently, —

"Tell me truly, Patience, for it is life or death to me. It's not disloyal to Sir Morris, dear. Is it true that there is some one else?"

She shut her teeth on her lip, while she drew one long,

slow breath. Then, as she looked steadily into his thin, clear-cut face, her lip quivered, and she took one step forward to his side.

“Yes, Jimmy, there is. And there will never be but one.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

QUITE in accordance with the tradition at which, in former days, she had been wont to scoff, Arline Leleu, one Sunday noon, was giving a family dinner-party. It was late October, and Jimmy and Patience had just returned from an eighteen months of honeymooning to and fro over the surface of the globe. Their happiness had been too sacred for the sight of curious friends, too buoyant to allow itself to be curbed by any social routine. Rather than that, they had lived the life of vagrants, roaming from place to place as chance might lead them, accountable to no man, and wholly content in the long, idle days of perfect intimacy. At length, however, even Stanwood had felt himself moved to complain. Because Patience's marriage had left him in the lurch, there was no especial reason that she should take herself wholly out of his sight. His campaign was the plan of a strategist.

At the extreme southern end of Des Carrières Street, one of the houses had long stood vacant. The house itself was roomy and comfortable; the outlook upon the river was superb. For days, Stanwood Tyler, pipe in mouth, paced to and fro before its staring, empty windows. A week later, he sought the agent and demanded a key. The next day, he moved his belongings into the two front rooms of the topmost floor. Then, when his books and his pipes were in order, he cabled to Patience that he had bought the house and was waiting for her and Jimmy to come home to live in it.

"It's no sort of use, Patsy," he confided to her, the night the Lords reached Quebec. "I can't get on without you. You belong to Jimmy, body and soul; I promise not to get in his way. I'll keep to my rooms most of the time; but I want to feel that you're here in the house. I'm older than I was, and you have been too long away."

And it was Jimmy who gave the most cordial assent to the new plan. Patience was all his own; Stanwood's strong, quiet presence would only give him one pleasure the more. And so, with scarcely a question, the new household of three started upon its happy course. To each one of the three, Arline's invitation had been an unwelcome break in the pleasant sense of settling down once more at home.

Nevertheless, the dinner was proving a gay little function. It could hardly do otherwise in Jimmy's jovial presence, while Patience, at the other end of the table, vied with her husband in hilarity. At her side, Leleu was swift to answer to her mood. Both Patience and Jimmy were conscious of the change in Leleu. Alone together, they had commented upon it, and confessed themselves unable to account for it. It was not entirely his growing political power, nor yet his increasing intimacy with his own wife. The influences of both were subtly blended; yet their combined effect was not enough to have wrought so great a transformation. Had they but known the truth, however, they would have known that the change had come in that one night when Leleu had gone from Stanwood Tyler to St. Just, from St. Just to Arline, from Arline to the empty streets. In that one night, Leleu's character, long dormant, leaped out in full-grown strength. In the years to come, it might develop; it would never change.

Leleu alone was conscious of the alteration made in

himself by the twenty-four hours which had followed his summons from Stanwood Tyler. Fused in the white-hot furnace of emotion, he had emerged another creature. His old self, eager, idealistic, was consumed to ashes. In its place had come forth a man of iron will, of steady purpose, a man of an almost infinite power of love, of an infinite sense of justice. And his justice was not wholly spent in weighing the frailties of Arline.

Strange to say, Arline took no heed of the change the night had wrought. Leleu was as loving as of old, as gentle in the showing of his love. The life-long habits of his earlier nature clung around him like a husk. One by one, they were soon to drop away; but the dropping was too gradual to make much mark upon her mind. The pressure of the velvet glove was so full of kind support that she failed to feel the iron hand within. Feeling, she would have nerved herself to a resentful pushing aside of the clasp. Instead, she yielded to its pressure. Leleu was gentler than of yore, more full of demonstrative affection. Up to a certain point, he now made no effort to guide the course of Arline's daily life. Beyond that point, as yet, Arline had never cared to go.

Over the soup, Leleu turned to face Patience.

"Tell me," he asked; "did you see much of Sir Morris?"

"Oh, yes. We were in London for six weeks, last spring, and he did everything for us."

Mrs. Brooke Lord glanced up from her plate.

"How did you like him among his own people, Patience?"

"Just as I always did, no more, no less. His people really are rather impressive; his mother is a most august little personage, and his sister filled me with wonder, each time I looked at her."

"With wonder?"

"Yes, she is an astounding mixture of dowdiness and elegance. Her nose is equine. I think her friends called her pre-Raphaelite. But, among all their grandeur, Sir Morris was the same dear boy we all knew. He and Jimmy and I used to have fine times together, talking of the dear old days."

"Do you know," Brooke Lord said thoughtfully; "I never understood Sir Morris's going home."

There came a little pause. Patience broke it.

"Family affection," she suggested dryly.

However, Brooke Lord persisted.

"Yes; but so suddenly. I think he had no notion of it, two days before he sailed."

Jimmy's eyes were fixed upon his wife, and her rising colour took from him the power of speech. It was Arline who answered.

"The question is, is he ever coming back?"

"He says so," Patience replied, with perfect calm. "Of course, his father is only just alive, and, after Sir Morris inherits, he will be more or less tied up at home. However, the old man may live to an endless age; and Sir Morris assured me over and over again that he would never be content until he had spent one more year among us."

Brooke Lord leaned back in his chair.

"After all, do you know," he observed; "it was a funny thing about Sir Morris. I thought, myself, he liked us. He was here for almost two years; I rather fancied he would end his days in Quebec. I am sure we all tried to be decent to him. And then, after all that, it was a bit queer to have him pack his boxes and take French leave."

Again there came the little pause. Again Patience broke it, lightly, although with a secret desire to thump Brooke Lord on the bald spot which was beginning to show upon his crown.

"Speaking of French leave," she remarked; "did we ever write you about our meeting Monsieur St. Just in Paris?"

Arline was scarlet now; but Leleu turned to Patience with a gleam of mirth in his dark eyes.

"Was the plaster off his face?" he asked.

"Yes; but the scar was n't," Jimmy retorted, from his place at Arline's side. "For once in your life, Leleu, you made a lasting mark."

Leleu laughed. The history was now so old that he could turn back to it without a pang. In fact, there had always been a bit of satisfaction in his mind, whenever he had thought of St. Just, sprawling upon the floor with his legs entangled in the legs of his chair.

"Was he glad to see you?" he queried.

Jimmy made counter query.

"Did you ever see a hound, after you'd licked it?" he asked.

"Do you mean the fellow really stopped to talk?" Brooke Lord demanded incredulously.

Jimmy's reply was brief.

"Ask Patience. She won't lie."

Patience laughed.

"It was in front of the Madeleine, one day. I saw him coming, and I poked Jimmy's arm, so he should see him, too. We both supposed that, as soon as he discovered us, he would have an errand somewhere else. Instead of that, he smiled as perkily as ever and came directly to where we were waiting for a cab."

"Had the nerve to poke out his hand under my very nose, and expect me to shake it," Jimmy supplemented, in reminiscent wrath.

"And did you?"

"Not on your life, Molly. Now and then I turn short-sighted, and that was the nowiest kind of a now. He

did n't appear to notice it, though. The next I saw of him, he was bowing and smirking at Patience, and I'm blest if she was n't shaking hands with him."

"Patience!" Mrs. Brooke Lord remonstrated.

Patience smiled demurely.

"It's a trick I learned at college. Really, it is very painful. I assure you that Monsieur St. Just turned quite white, by the time that I let go."

"The question is," Stanwood Tyler remarked gravely; "was the game worth the candle, Pat? Myself, I dislike the touching toads."

"Did you go from Paris straight down to Rome?" Arline asked, with a slight showing of annoyance.

"No; we stopped on the Riviera," Patience answered.

Carried along by the general mirth at the table, the girl had forgotten how distasteful to Arline the present talk must be. Arline's face recalled her from her carelessness, and she sought to turn the talk into other lines. Jimmy, however, at his sister's side, failed to see the changing colour in her cheeks, the frown between her brows, the steely glint within her violet eyes. He reverted to his former theme.

"St. Just was as jerky-perky as ever; but I thought he did n't look quite as prosperous. In fact, I've a notion or two in regard to the ancestry of his necktie. He asked for you all —"

"For me?" Leleu inquired.

"Yes, for you in particular." Jimmy threw back his head and laughed hilariously at the recollection of their talk. "Almost with tears in his eyes, he assured me you were a man whose great future had been brought to naught by your blind adherence to a worn-out policy."

"How do you like that, Mr. Minister of Agriculture?" Mrs. Brooke Lord interpolated, with a smile.

Long before this, she and Leleu had become great

friends. Mrs. Brooke Lord was very much a woman, and, woman-like, she knew certain things by instinct. It had not been Amédée Leleu's fast-growing fame which had won her tardy liking, then her love. The hours she had spent in his house during the slow convalescence of Arline had taught Mrs. Brooke Lord many a lesson. Caring as she did for Leleu the man, however, she gloried yet the more earnestly in Leleu the politician.

He met her teasing question with a laugh.

"And yet," he added thoughtfully; "St. Just taught me a good many lessons."

"So he implied," Jimmy said gravely.

Patience corrected him.

"No; he told you in so many words. It's only women who imply." Then, with a little air of finality, she dismissed the subject by means of a wholly irrelevant question. "Is n't Agatha to be on exhibition, to-day, Arline?"

"Of course," Leleu put in hastily, before his wife could make quiet answer, —

"Yes, later. I told the nurse to bring her down, as soon as we had left the table."

"Not till then? I suppose it would be subversive of discipline, if I were to ask to see her now."

"Better not, Patience," Mrs. Brooke Lord advised her, in a swift aside. "Arline does n't like to have her down at meals."

"Oh, why not?" Patience remonstrated.

"She cries for things she must n't have."

"But what if she does?" Patience replied serenely.

"She could soon be taught what *no, no!* means."

Leleu turned to her with some eagerness.

"You think so, too?" he asked.

"Of course. Does n't Arline?"

Arline glanced up carelessly.

"I'm not such a tyrant as Amédée would have me be," she said.

Leleu flushed ; but Patience spoke.

"It's not tyranny ; it is for the baby's own good."

Arline laughed, and in her laugh was the little edge which Patience had known of yore.

"The optimism of the childless woman," she observed, with quiet sarcasm. "You and Amédée would doubtless agree to perfection. Until one is responsible for the child, one never cares how much it cries."

"But it would n't cry more than once," Patience persisted, and again Leleu gave her that eager look which, for the moment, she was quite at a loss to interpret.

The interpretation came later on, however. Over the dessert, Patience avowed that she could wait no longer. Excusing herself from the table, she ran away up the stairs. A moment afterward, she returned, with baby Agatha held high on her strong young shoulder. The child's face was still flushed, her blue eyes heavy with sleep, as she came riding into the room on her lofty perch. Above the soft white embroideries of her clothing, her little head rose nobly ; her baby lips, smiling slightly, opened to show her milk-white dots of teeth, and her yellow hair rolled out in a shining aureole about her dainty face. In colour and in form, she was all the child of Arline. The smile, however, just stealing into sight about the corners of her lips, was like Leleu ; like him, too, was the expression in the violet eyes.

With a laugh and a kiss, Patience swung the child down from her shoulder and, moving about the table, offered the little face to each in turn. Then, coming back to her own place, she pushed her chair slightly away from the table, and sat down with the child upon her knee. Instantly one baby hand clutched the table cloth, the other swept towards Patience's plate.

Patience snuggled the child out of reach.

"No, baby. Not for you," she said gayly.

The child turned her head, cocked one little eye up at her aunt, and then, burying her head against Patience's shoulder, smiled up at her ingratiatingly.

Jimmy watched the manœuvre with amused and adoring eyes.

"Bless the baby! She knows how to wheedle, all right. That's you all over, Arline. The smile is Leleu's, though. You French Canadians are hall-marked by your smile."

And Arline's brows met in a sudden frown. She would have liked it far better, had little Agatha showed no strain of her father's blood.

"No," Patience was reiterating merrily, as she caught the determined little hands. "That is n't for Agatha; it belongs to Aunt Patience."

The child's lip rolled over, and Arline interposed.

"Give her a little. Anything is better than having her begin to cry."

But Leleu, smiling and very gentle, yet shook his head.

"No, Patience, please. I'd rather that she did n't. No, baby."

At his voice, the child looked at him and, though the tears were brimming in the dark blue eyes, no sound came from the baby lips. She was waiting, as so often she had waited before, to find out who would be the victor in this contest of discipline.

Arline's voice broke the little hush.

"Give her a bit, Patience. Just see how good she is."

The child turned alertly, snatched at the plate, then, staying her hand, she burst into a storm of shrieks, as Leleu said gravely, —

"No, Arline. No, Agatha. Must n't touch the plate."

For an instant, two baby heels battered the front of Patience's lap, and the room echoed with the cries pour-

ing forth from the baby throat. Then Arline, scarlet with annoyance and anger and shame, pushed back her chair and, passing around the table, took the child from the arms of her astonished aunt.

"Poor baby!" she said, as she returned to seat herself at her own place. "Do they starve my baby daughter? Come, dear, shall have some sweeties."

But even while the sweeties were poised in the air, little Agatha's lip rolled over yet once again, and two baby arms were stretched out across the table.

"Papa," she sobbed. "Papa!"

"See, dearie. Don't you want a taste?" Arline urged.

The tears still on her cheeks, the child accepted the taste, and then another taste, and yet one more. Arline laughed.

"Good; is n't it, baby?" she asked. "Come, then."

Leleu interposed, and his tone was very quiet.

"I'd rather you did n't give her any more, Arline."

With a jerk, Arline pushed her chair away from the table.

"How can you grudge her the bit of pleasure, Amédée? I could n't be so cruel."

Leleu's lips tightened. Then he said, —

"It seems to me more cruel to the child, Arline, to give her what you know will make her ill."

"How tiresome you are, Amédée! Who has the care of her, I'd like to know?" she demanded. Then, with sudden fierceness, she snatched the child close against her breast. "Poor little darling! Does your father spoil all your good times?" she asked, between her nervous kisses.

Startled at the abrupt gesture, the child once more cried out. Arline lifted her head.

"There, Amédée, you see for yourself just how it is," she said, and her voice had a ring of bitter triumph.

“Come, dearie.” As she spoke, she rose. “Come with mamma, dearest, and we ’ll see what we can find, up-stairs.”

Holding the child in her arms, she turned away ; but, as she went out the door, two baby hands were extended in piteous appeal, and a wishful baby voice begged once and yet again, —

“Papa ! Papa !”

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FOUR Octobers had passed away since Arline's dinner party, that far-off Sunday noon, and a fifth October was on the land, mellow and ripe and golden, the climax of the year. The ancient city on the cliff was all gray and gold, gray walls and golden sunshine ; gray and gold, too, were the long open stretches of country bordering the Sainte Foy Road, stretches where the yellowing needles of the tamarack caught and held the sunshine away from the pale stems of the bare white birches. Here and there, a twig of maple still bore its crown of gaudy foliage, and the wayside paths were heaped thick with the bright brown, crispy leaves. Nowhere, however, in all the city were the gray and gold so dainty as in the woodlands surrounding the white convent walls of Bellevue.

There in the sunny woodlands, little Agatha Leleu played for long hours at a time, now romping gayly with her convent mates, then ever and anon breaking away from the little group around her, to go leaping towards the sweet-faced nun who lingered near, to throw her slim little arms around the skirts of the nun and snuggle her rosy face in the folds of the black gown. And the nun, gentle and sweet and dainty, never failed to stoop to caress the eager little face upraised to her own. Then, with a joyous laugh, the child went bounding away again into the midst of the group which rarely failed to cluster about her. A child in her heedless mirth, little Agatha was like a woman in the passion with which she craved affection.

Agatha was seven now, and in all the dignity of her second term of convent life. Already she was prone to cast a patronizing eye upon the children who had entered with the opening September term. Already she was dreaming vaguely of the day when she could leave her bed in the great dormitory where the cots stood in their long white lines, and, like the big girls, be promoted to her own little cell. To the child, standing at the entrance of the corridor which led between the rows of cells, it seemed that life could hold nothing more perfect than the ownership of one of those tiny rooms, dainty and sweet and spotless as the guardian nun who slept in one of them. The plain bare walls, the little bed, the crimped white curtains were lovelier far, to Agatha's wishful eyes, than all the luxury of her father's house. Day after day, the tiny black-gowned figure lingered and peered and looked forward to the hour when she should be grown up and settled in a cell. For the present, the happy convent life bounded the child's entire perspective.

Better than the cells, though, Agatha loved the nuns. Up to the hour of her entering the convent, her little life had been swayed by awe and even fear. With her blond beauty, her inheritance from her mother seemed to have stopped short. By temperament, Agatha Leleu was her father's child. Like his own youth, her childhood was gentle, sensitive and wholly reticent. Loving all men, she yearned for love in return. When it was refused to her, she grieved; but it was a silent sort of grieving which ate into her life, but made no outward sign. In the same way, she accepted her mother's irregular discipline, the hours of exuberant affection, the moments of bitter, causeless rebuke. In some vague, childish fashion, Agatha linked it all with her mother's dazzling beauty. Arline, to the mind of her little daughter, was like a fairy queen, and fairy queens had privileges which were denied to other

people. The child's first little lessons, self-taught like all first lessons, concerned themselves with avoiding the displeasure of her mother, of shunning her mother's presence in the too frequent hours of storm. She learned to know the signs: the rising tide of colour in the cheeks, the lifted head, the flashing eye, the harder note in the voice.

As a rule, Agatha contrived to escape the storms. Now and then, however, she was helpless before them. Tiny as she was, she yet learned not to cry, for crying only annoyed her mother more. Her lips might quiver, and the tears hang heavy on her long brown lashes; but she made no sound. And, later, she could always creep away in search of her father, sure that in his loving, clinging arms she would find peace and consolation.

There were other hours, too, hours when, daintily dressed and smiling, she was the comrade of a mother sweeter far than any fairy queen. In such hours, Agatha reaped to the full her little harvest of affection. Her mother played wondrous plays with her, told her merry stories, and lavished upon her goodies whereof the present taste atoned for the later woes to come. Such hours, while they lasted, seemed to the child to promise unending continuance. Then, of a sudden, the mood would change, and Agatha, with shaking lip and throbbing heart, could only turn away and go trudging up the stairs to tell her woes to the shabby old doll whose skirts had more than once been used to dry the sorrowful blue eyes.

Now and then, at such times, Leleu was present; but, as a rule, he made no sign, nor did he try to comfort his little daughter in her mother's presence. His sense of loyalty to his wife forbade his interference. Agatha never heard his remonstrances which followed her going from the room. She only knew that, sometime before she slept, her father would come up to the great nursery, take her on his knee and cuddle her and speak loving words in

the mellow French tongue which he used when they were quite alone. And then, when the tears had fallen and been wiped away, what talks they had! What games they played!

Once only had Agatha seen a contest of will between her parents. Child though she was, it had branded itself ineffaceably upon her memory. It had taken place after breakfast, one morning of the previous winter, and it had had to do with her entering the convent. For the once, Leleu had been too hurt and shocked and angry to think of his child's presence. When he returned to a startled consciousness that she was in the room, he had found her, white and shaking with terrified sobs, her fingers in her ears and her face buried in the cushion of her father's chair. A week later, tenderly and with loving words, he left her sitting on the knee of the Mother Superior, in the great reception room at Bellevue Convent.

Agatha held her breath and twisted her little feet together in agony, as she saw him go. The habit of the years prevailed, however. Her lips quivered; but she made no sound, as she turned to cast a terrified glance up into the strange face above her. The face was set in stiff white folds of linen; but the eyes and lips were mother-sweet, the arms that drew the child closer were mother-kind. A moment later, Agatha was sobbing quietly on the breast of the Mother Superior, and the voice of the Mother Superior was in her ears, bidding her be brave and happy for her father's sake.

From that hour onward, Agatha, in so far as was possible for the least of the minims, became the adoring satellite of the Mother Superior; and, next to the Mother Superior, she adored that other sweet-faced nun whom she was trained to call Mother Saint Faith. French gentlewomen both of them, their loving, steadfast discipline was everything for the child, so long tossed to and fro on the seas

of Arline's wayward temper. As yet, but little harm had been done. A thorough child and hence imperfect, Agatha was loving and wholly biddable. This firm, strict discipline was new to her; but she was swift to discover that love, love to the nuns, love to her childish mates, was the foundation upon which it had been reared. With scarcely a struggle, she yielded herself to its sway.

Whatever might be his other engagements, Leleu presented himself at the convent, as often as the day for visiting came around. At first, his manner to Agatha had been marked with a certain anxiety. Then, as the weeks went by and the child showed herself happy and well, the anxiety vanished and Leleu gave himself over wholly to the contentment of their meetings. To Agatha, these days were the high days of her life. Once the door shut upon her father, she fell to counting the time before he would come again. During the hour or two which they could spend together, she was like a mad creature, dragging him here and there to show him where her days were spent, bringing forth sundry rows of shaky, uneven stitches or still more shaky, uneven letters for his admiring scrutiny, or perching herself astride his knee while, between gleeful shouts of laughter, she recited over to him her latest answer from the catechism, smacking her lips at each long word and then, when all was done, nuzzling her fluffy golden head into his waistcoat while she awaited his word of commendation.

The commendation never failed to come, coupled with loving words of admonition. She must be a good girl, and mind the nuns, and say her prayer at bedtime, no matter how tired she was. And what about the picture she was going to send to Uncle Jimmy, the picture drawn with blue and red and yellow pencils? But, before she went to get it, she would better give her father one more kiss. For the happiness of those afternoons was not

entirely upon Agatha's side. Fond as he was of his child, Leleu's pride in her fully kept pace with his love. Her baby accomplishments seemed to him wondrous beyond words. Her little body, fast stretching from its baby chubbiness into the lankier lines of little girlhood, was to him more perfect of form than any statue. Of the rare beauty of her face, no one could make denial. In feature and in colouring, it was the face of Arline, done over into childish lines; but the winning, sensitive look was like the pictures of the mother whom Leleu had never known. And, day by day, the even discipline, the simple food, the early hours were telling on the child. She grew as strong and hardy as a flower in the sun. Like the flower in the sun, she lost no whit of her sweet daintiness.

Miss her as he would and did, Leleu felt no doubt of its being better for them all that Agatha should go into the convent at the earliest possible age. Arline's influence was not good for the child; neither was the child's presence good for the greater intimacy which he was seeking to establish with his wife. As Père Leleu had bidden him, seven years and more before, he was endeavouring so to surround his wife with his love that there should be room for nothing else. Once and once only had he spoken sternly to Arline. As soon as she had quite ended her slow convalescence, he had called her to the library, one summer evening, and there gently, but with perfect plainness of speech, he had reminded her of her marriage vow. Her own religious freedom always and ever should remain intact. For his own and for that of the child, he demanded the same right. Without reservation and without bitterness, he sought to impress upon her, once for all, that no longer would he submit to the domestic tyranny which she had been wont to exercise of yore, no longer would he allow the slighting comment regarding others of his race and creed. In fact, as well as in name, his Cath-

olic church should be held holy. And, above all else, Arline was in no way to hamper him in his plans for the rearing of their baby girl.

And Arline, rebellious though she was at heart, yet yielded to his will and gave the promises which he demanded of her. In truth, she dared not disobey, for it was a new Leleu who stood before her, and his kind, unfaltering declaration of his rights carried conviction to her latent sense of justice. The talk, threatening at first to lead to open war, had ended in her perfect submission; and, for long months afterwards, it bore its fruit. Truth to tell, it pleased Arline far better to yield to a masterful Leleu than to rule an inert husband. Even the bowing to a will stronger than her own possessed the charm of novelty.

As the years crept by, however, the charm departed with the novelty. Leleu's will still prevailed; but Arline chafed against its sway. His increasing devotion to his church irked her, as did his frequent calls upon Père Leleu. She rebelled openly and aloud and in the presence of the child at his strict, steady discipline, now opposing him with angry words, now shedding angry tears over what she termed his cruelty. And then, one bright Sunday morning, Leleu proudly announced his intention of taking Agatha to mass. An hour later, he hurried the child through the hall and out of the house, that she might not hear her mother's words; but, as he passed up the aisle of the Basilica, the pride had all gone out of him, and in its place was a heavy sadness. And then more years passed by, and it was time for little Agatha to enter the convent school.

In all his after life, Leleu never allowed himself to think back to the weeks which had preceded the final step. They were weeks when storm only gave place to thunderous calm, to break again in storm. It had seemed to him a matter

of course that Agatha should be trained by the nuns of the Congregation, as past generations of Leleus had been trained in their time. Quite as a matter of course, he had spoken to Arline, one morning, and he had been aghast at her fiery opposition. Later in the day, Arline had appealed to Jimmy and even to Mrs. Brooke Lord. To her surprise, she found herself standing quite alone. The very sense of her aloneness increased her opposition. In the end, however, her opposition had proved futile, and Leleu had had his way. From the drawn curtains of her window, Arline had watched the cab drive from the door, bearing with it the small bone of contention to whom she had refused a parting kiss. Arline Leleu was not an imaginative sort of woman; nevertheless, she did stop to wonder, now and then, what would be her permanent frame of mind in case the horses ran away. The recurring wonder led her, upon Leleu's return, to greet him with a gentleness to which of late her manner had been a stranger.

Agatha gone, the point of difference decided for better or for worse, the Leleus dropped back again into an outward semblance of the peaceful life which had followed upon their moving into the house on the Esplanade. As if to atone for her former fits of petulance, Arline was more lovable now than ever before since Leleu had known her. She was happier, too, for it was impossible for her to blind herself to the fact that her husband was treading steadily forward along the paths of fame; and ambition was by no means lacking in Arline Leleu. Her pride increased her gentleness, until Leleu, ever ready to forget another's fault, gave himself over to the hope that their stormy days were forever ended.

Week after week, when Leleu started for the convent, Arline sent tender messages to the child; but never once did she ask to go with him. And Leleu felt that it was

better so. He dreaded to sound again the note of antagonism, dreaded to take Arline's influence within those quiet walls. When summer came, he suggested a trip abroad, and Arline, in her glad assent, took no heed of the real cause which underlay his words. To her mind, it was quite natural that he should seize the opportunity to go, when the temporary victory of the Conservative party left him more free than usual from political duties. And the child would be quite safe and happy to spend the vacation in the care of the nuns.

Agatha came home on a visit, however, during the week before her parents were to sail. Leleu had gone to fetch her, and Arline was waiting in the door, as the cab came in under the Kent Gate. With a certain fierceness, she snatched the child from Leleu's arms and covered her rosy little face with eager kisses, chattering to her, meanwhile, in the argot which comes by nature to the mother lips. Then, letting go the child, she uttered a cry of protest at sight of the plain little black frock, picked up the child again and ran away up the stairs to her own room. At noon, when Leleu returned to lunch, he was met in the hall by a little bundle of white lace frills and pale pink ribbons, and, during the meal, little Agatha sat in a chair at Arline's side and ate of dainties whose very existence had faded from her memory.

Too swiftly for them all, the week sped by. Arline, in the intervals of her packing and of her preparations for closing the house, lavished upon Agatha much the same sort of care that a Paris doll receives, on the morning after Christmas day. And Leleu, watching with hungry eyes to see the happiness of the two people he loved best, forced himself to disregard the petty relaxings of discipline. To Arline, just then, life was the colour of rose. He would let her enjoy the child to the full, and trust to the nuns and the summer to undo the little harm which

could develop in a week. Now and then he wondered that Arline never seemed to talk with the child about her convent life. Honourable himself, he trusted to the honour of others. It never would have occurred to him to suspect the daily lessons which Arline was instilling into the receptive little brain.

"Not now, dear," was her invariable ending of the lesson. "Some day, we'll surprise your father with it all; but we're not ready yet."

The week ended and the day for the sailing at hand, the cab once again drove up to the door, and Leleu came down the steps, holding Agatha by the hand. On the steps, Arline, smiling and beautiful, waved them a laughing farewell, and Agatha, laughing and dimpled, threw a kiss back to the pretty mother whose good-by words were wellnigh drowned by the noise of the wheels.

"Good-by, darling. Be a good girl and keep well. I'll bring you a doll, when I come home, and such a frock! And be sure you don't forget about the lessons."

The cab turned out under the Kent Gate, and Leleu, settling back in his seat, took the little hand in his.

"What are the lessons, dearie?" he asked.

For an instant, Agatha drew down her face into a look of portentous gravity. Then, far back at the corners of her lips, there came the beginnings of a smile. The smile widened and grew to a laugh until, with a gurgle of fun, Agatha buried her face in her father's sleeve.

"You must n't ask," she protested gleefully. "It's a secret, a very 'portant secret between mamma and me."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

“**W**HERE now?” Jimmy demanded jovially, as he came striding across the Esplanade.

Leleu glanced up at the hail.

“Out the Sainte Foy Road.”

Jimmy laughed.

“To see the babe?”

“Yes.”

Jimmy swung into step at his side.

“Good. I’m walking, myself. I think I’ll go, too.”

Leleu’s face, where of late the shadows had lain heavy, brightened, as it never failed to do in Jimmy’s presence. Totally alien to each other in race and training, the years had bound the two men into a ripe intimacy.

“I’ve news,” Jimmy proclaimed, as they crossed the roadway under the gate and turned down the hill beside the empty market place.

Leleu raised his brows.

“Political?”

“No; nothing there to interest you. We’re at a dead low tide of prosperous stagnation, since our fellows ousted you from the chief seats. No; my news is wholly personal. I’ve had a letter from Sir Morris.”

“What then?”

“He was to sail, the twenty-third,” Jimmy answered. “To-day is the thirty-first. He ought to be here, to-morrow. He’s to be at our house, you know.”

“What sends him over?”

Jimmy laughed again.

"He could n't withstand our urging. For a year, Patsy and I have been begging him to come; but he did n't dare to leave his father. The old man has taken a turn for the better now, and Sir Morris is on his way. He'll be here for a good share of the winter. Really," Jimmy added, with boyish eagerness; "I begin to get a bit impatient to see the dear old chap once more."

"I liked him, too," Leleu added thoughtfully.

"Well you might. He stood your friend, when you had no notion of the fact," Jimmy assured him. "Did you see much of him, last summer?"

"Almost not at all."

"But why?"

Again the cloud came back to Leleu's eyes.

"Arline did n't care for him," he made brief answer.

"I remember now. He and Arline never used to hit it off any too well. By the way, Arline was telling me, only yesterday, that you met St. Just in Paris."

Even more heavily the cloud sank over Leleu's face.

"Yes, we did," he assented.

"And that the — the creature said he was coming back here soon."

Leleu varied his phrase by a single word.

"Yes, he did," he assented again.

Jimmy smote the curbstone with his stick.

"I wish I presided over the immigration office," he said vengefully. "What does he want?"

"He says," there was the faintest possible stress upon the verb; "he says he is coming back to take a position of importance on the *Echo*."

"And, in reality, he is coming here to raise the devil," Jimmy made savage comment. "Did Arline see much of him?"

"More than I wished," Leleu confessed reluctantly.

"Why did n't you stop it?"

Leleu looked up at him with sombre eyes.

"How could I?"

Tucking his stick under his arm, Jimmy plunged his fists into his pockets.

"I'll be hanged if I know," he said, after a pause.

The pause lengthened, and only the click of their heels on the boards broke the hush. At last Jimmy spoke again.

"Leleu, I am sorry for you," he said shortly. "Arline is my sister; I know her through and through. I know things are n't going right at your house. In your place, I should go mad. For us men, it is easier to be decapitated at one fell stroke than to bear the worriment of eternal pinpricks. However —"

Leleu drew a long breath.

"Yes," he agreed slowly; "there's always the *however*. Still, I think I am glad that you know."

"And it's worse than ever?" Jimmy queried kindly. "You need n't mind about speaking out to me, old man. Patsy and I see things, even if we don't say much about them."

Leleu bowed his head.

"Yes," he agreed once more; "it is worse than ever. Sometimes, I almost despair."

"What is it, temper or nagging?" Jimmy inquired tersely.

But Leleu walked on in silence.

"I was wrong to speak," he said at last. "Such things are better buried out of sight."

"If they don't end by also burying you," Jimmy said, in blunt sympathy. "It's hard lines, man; but keep a grip on your courage. Arline is cranky; but she is bound to come to her senses in the end."

However, the end was not yet.

At the entrance to the wide avenue of Bellevue, Leleu halted in uncertainty. Not so Jimmy, who strode in through the gate.

"Oh, I say," he remonstrated; "please remember that I'm Agatha's goddaddy, and have a claim on her, too. What did you think, that I was going to stand in the road and contemplate the casket, while you went in and made merry with your jewel? Not on your life, man! I'm coming, too."

And little Agatha, that night, confided to Mother Saint Faith that never again, if she lived for ninety years, did she expect to have so good a time as she had had, that day.

A week later, measles broke out among the smaller children, and in hot haste the Mother Superior telephoned to Leleu to take his child home, away from all danger of infection. In hot haste Leleu obeyed the summons, and, by nightfall, little Agatha, hearty and happy, was settled in her father's home for a wholly indefinite period.

For three days, a summer calm brooded over the house. Then, of a sudden, the storm broke, broke with a relentless fury which swept the home to ruin.

Leleu came in from his office earlier than usual, one November afternoon. The golden haze of Indian summer lay warm on the city, and he had turned his back upon his work, for the sake of taking little Agatha out for a walk on the terrace. For a long hour, the two boon comrades had paced to and fro, watching the sunset colours die out to a level gray above the heights of Levis. To Agatha, the walk had been fraught with great interest, by reason of a Newfoundland puppy who, forsaking his master, had attached himself to her side, now and then mouthing a corner of her coat in token of his amicable disposition. Leleu, alert and eager, had entered into the frolic, now allowing the dog to worry his stick, now

moving on at Agatha's side with steps which he vainly endeavoured to adapt to the reach of her short legs.

At last the chill of the falling twilight had driven them from the terrace. Up through the dusky tunnel of Louis Street, Agatha went skipping at Leleu's side, laughing and chattering in a perfect abandonment of glee. Then, turning north into D'Auteuil Street, they came to their own door and to the end of the happy afternoon.

In leisurely fashion, Leleu let himself into the house and paused in the hall long enough to pocket his latch key. As he stood there beside a table, his glance rested vaguely upon a bit of card, rested and slowly gathered to a focus. For an instant, his eyes blazed, and he bit his lower lip. Then, with perfect quiet, he turned to the child.

"Run away up-stairs now, Agatha, and ask Hortense to take off your coat, while you tell her what we've been doing."

He bent above the child for one long, clinging kiss. Then he slowly took off his coat, before turning towards the door of the drawing-room whence a swish of skirts had proclaimed the presence of Arline. His face had grown very white, and his gestures were singularly still and deliberate; but in the depths of his eyes there glowed a lambent beam. During the time it took to draw one deep, slow breath, he stood there, motionless. Then he stepped to the doorway and lifted back the heavy draperies.

"Arline?" he said interrogatively.

At his voice, she glanced up from the book in her hand. Dressed with unwonted care, her face flushed to a deeper pink than usual and her dark blue eyes alight, she seemed to Leleu a lovely picture, as she looked up to greet his coming.

"Oh; is it you, Amédée? I did not expect you to be home so soon."

"I suppose," he answered briefly.

Her head lifted itself proudly, for it was plain that he spoke with meaning and that the meaning was hostile.

"I do not understand," she said.

Deliberately he raised his eyes and bent upon her a piercing glance, as if to read the very depths of her soul.

"I think you do," he said then. "It is useless to deny. You may have forgotten that this card was left on the tray in the hall."

She bit her lip, while she reproached herself for her carelessness. However, she felt herself antagonized by his tone of censure, and she determined to play the game to the end with what aggressiveness she could. Had Leleu phrased his words differently, she would have told him that St. Just's call, that afternoon, had taken her completely by surprise, that her elaborate toilette, even, had been made for the calls she had intended to pay. Now, angered by Leleu's unjust blame, she was willing to allow him to put whatever interpretation he might choose upon the afternoon's events.

"What if it was left on the tray?" she inquired disdainfully.

The question was unanswerable. Leleu shifted his ground.

"You know, I think," he said steadily; "that I asked you not to allow Monsieur St. Just to call."

"Why not?"

"Because he is not a fit person for you to know."

She raised her brows.

"But it was you who introduced him to me."

"Yes. I know him better now."

"Perhaps," she said lightly. "Still, Amédée, it was you who did the mischief."

Again he regarded her fixedly.

"And also I who can undo it."

She tossed her book to a table and, turning slightly in her chair, rested one rounded arm across its back.

"But how?" she queried calmly.

"I can forbid him the house."

Her answering laugh was low, but it stabbed him like a knife.

"How melodramatic you Frenchmen are, Amédée! You take everything with such desperate seriousness. What harm can that poor little man do you?"

"None. However, he can harm my wife."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Your wife can take care of herself."

For an instant, the old flame of love flashed up in his eyes, and he laid his hand on her arm.

"Not while I live, Arline. That is my privilege."

At his touch and at his words, her face grew gentler. Nevertheless, she sought to argue her point.

"But a man like that can never harm me."

Quite unconsciously to himself, Leleu's tone hardened with the thought of St. Just. Quite unconsciously to himself, too, that involuntary hardening was the mark of a crisis in his life.

"Is it no harm to you," he demanded; "that you receive as a friend the man who has tried his best to ruin me?"

"But he tried in vain, and it was so long ago," she urged carelessly. "Really, Amédée, it seems a bit childish to take up the matter at this late day. Isn't it rather a confession that he succeeded in doing you a harm?"

"I suppose," he answered simply. "Why not? He did do me harm, much harm."

She smiled.

"It is the first time I ever heard you admit it, though," she remarked, as she busied herself with a contrary fold of her gown. "Most people have said that you never really came to your own, Amédée, till after that

Cartier affair. All in all, it merely served as a bit of free advertising."

Without her intending it in the least, the word stung him. He turned on his heel, went to the window, and stood looking out across the dark Esplanade.

"I was not aware that I needed to be advertised," he said a little haughtily. Then he added, without turning his head, "However, that is not the main point. For once and all time, Arline, I must beg of you that you do not receive *Monsieur St.* Just in this house."

The colour flamed up in her cheeks. She laughed again.

"Do you prefer that I give him tea in one of the kiosks on the terrace?" she asked. "Really, *Amédée*, it would be rather cold there, at this season."

His steady gaze out at the shadowy street gave no hint that he had heard her flippant words. He let the silence fall over them. Then he added, —

"Nor do I wish that you should extend to him any courtesy whatsoever."

Deliberately she rose to her feet and stood facing him, tall and queenly in her indignation.

"Then," she said slowly; "do I understand that you presume," the words came with even greater slowness; "presume to dictate to me whom I shall choose for my friends?"

Turning about, he bowed his head in assent.

"Yes," he replied, with a deliberation equal to her own.

"Yes. In a case like this, I do."

For a long moment, their eyes met in a drawn battle of will. Then Arline turned away and left the room, and, as the heavy draperies swung back behind her, the look in her face was not good to see.

According to her custom, Agatha came running into the dining-room, that night, on the heels of the dessert. Above her crisp white embroideries, her little face was

glowing like a flower, her tongue, unloosed by the joys of the afternoon, wagged ceaselessly. Save for a word or two exchanged for the benefit of the servants, the dinner had dragged by in perfect silence. Agatha's coming was like an electric lamp bursting in upon a darkened place. Both Leleu and Arline were dazed by her strong vitality, as she romped about the room and filled its silence with her merry chatter. Suddenly and without warning, she turned to face Arline.

"Mamma," she begged; "dearest mamma, may I tell our secret now?"

"What secret, dear?" Arline made listless answer.

Agatha frowned in childish rebuke.

"Our 'portant secret. Do you forget it, mamma? Our lesson. May I, please may n't I tell it now?"

Arline started, and her cheeks grew white; but, for an instant, she spoke no word of reply.

"Please, dearest mamma, I want to say it. I had such a beautiful time, this afternoon, and we played with the little big puppy and now I know he'd love to hear it. Please, can't I say the lesson now?" the child argued inconsequently.

Arline hesitated. Her eyes, fixed upon Leleu, narrowed almost to a line, and her lips grew ashy white. Then she made steady, steely answer, —

"Yes, dear. You may say it now."

"Oh, good!" Agatha's caper of joy and her clapping hands made a strange contrast to the absolute quiet of the mother. Then she clicked her heels together, smoothed down her little skirts, clasped her hands behind her and stood very straight. "I believe," she began, looking up into her father's face where, in spite of his gloom, an expectant smile had gathered; "I believe that it is wrong to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary. I don't believe in Purgatory. I don't believe in the mass, and, as soon

as I'm old enough, I won't mind one thing the nuns have told me to do. And — What was the rest of it, mamma?"

But Arline made no reply. Deadly white, the cold drops standing out upon his brow, and his lips distorted into an unearthly smile, Leleu had risen to his feet.

"You," he said, in a voice so low and harsh that barely could she understand the words; "you, Arline, have done this accursed thing! May the judgment of God be upon your head!" Then he turned to the child and held out his hand. "Come, Agatha, come up to the nursery."

Nearly an hour later, he came down the stairs again. His step was slow and uncertain like the step of an old, old man. His shoulders were bowed together, and heavy lines had cut themselves in his thin, dark face. His hat was in one hand; in the other was a small bag. Behind him, her eyes scarlet from many tears, the maid, Hortense, was carrying Agatha in her arms. The child was capped and coated, and her little arms gripped fast her faithful old doll.

Leaving his bag in the hall, Leleu pushed aside the draperies at the door and paused before his wife. With cold deliberation, she raised her eyes. Then, as she saw his hat and coat, she started to her feet in alarm.

"Amédée! What is it that you are going to do?"

"I am going away." Distrustful of his English in such a crisis, he chose his words with cautious precision, although his voice was wellnigh inaudible. "The hour is past when it is wise to argue it. For myself, I could bear it to the end; for my child, not one other hour. No. Be silent!" And, as he raised his hand, over the silence boomed the first wailing note of the evening bell, tolled for the dead throughout the season of All Souls. "There is no need for words. My mind is made up. My child must be kept safe and inviolate. You have been faithless

to your marriage vow, faithless to me, faithless to your duties of motherhood. Until I learn of your repentance, learn that your penitence will bear its fruit in your life, no longer can I leave my child in your power. My duty now is all to her, since you have defied the care with which I have sought to guard your life. Good-by, Arline. And may you know a swift repentance for the harm you have tried to do ! ”

For an instant longer he stood there, his head bowed, his lips moving silently, while over the quiet room there fell the deep, plaintive notes of the tolling bell. Then reverently he made the sacred sign, turned away and left the room.

For an instant, Arline stood, as if stupefied. The stupefaction ended swiftly, and she sprang forward with a wild cry, —

“ Amédée ! Come back ! ”

But already he was in the cold, dark street, and the last dull notes of the evening bell, tolling, tolling for the dead, furnished the only answer to her cry.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE next morning was warm and sunny, and Stanwood Tyler, pipe in mouth and his hands locked behind him, was pacing up and down the southern end of the terrace, enjoying to the full the brief half-hour between breakfast and office. He glanced up, as the shadow of Sir Morris Plante fell on the boards at his side. The step of Sir Morris was full of nervous hurry, his face of a dull foreboding.

"Oh, I say, I'm glad to get you, when you are quite by yourself," he said, as he dropped into the rhythm of Stanwood's step, then unconsciously sought to hasten its steady beat. "I had something to tell you, to ask, rather. Is anything wrong at the Leleus'?"

Without taking his pipe from between his teeth, Stanwood made brief answer.

"There has been something wrong at the Leleus', ever since the day that they were engaged."

Sir Morris laughed apologetically.

"Oh, I don't know about its being so bad as that," he protested. Then once more his tone grew grave. "But, I mean, something new, something especial."

Stanwood shook his head.

"I have heard of nothing. Why do you ask?"

"Because I met Leleu and the child going into the Château, soon after eight, last night. He had a bag, and the child was carrying a doll. It reminded me of the flight into Egypt. Leleu looked as if he had come to the end of

his strength. Of course I did n't speak to him. He looked at me; but I've no idea he saw me."

Stanwood emptied his pipe, frowned, refilled his pipe and punched the filling home.

"At what time?" he asked then.

"Not long after eight. I met Jimmy at the club, at half after, and this was earlier."

"Did you say anything to Jimmy?"

"I could n't," Sir Morris answered simply. "It's his own people, you know. I thought I'd best wait and speak to you."

"Do you think he knew it?"

Sir Morris shook his head.

"He'd have showed the worry of it."

Stanwood smoked in silence for a few minutes.

"What do you make of it?" he asked abruptly.

"Domestic smash."

"So bad as that?"

"What else could it be? As a rule, a man does n't take his seven-year-old daughter to a hotel in his own town, unless there's serious cause."

"Poor Leleu!"

"Yes," Sir Morris agreed. "Poor Leleu!"

And to neither man did it occur that there might be a doubt regarding the source of the blame.

By the time they had returned to the house, Jimmy had already been summoned to the house on the Esplanade. An hour later, when he left Arline, his face was anxious and determined. For the first time in her life, Arline was too thoroughly terrified at the results of her action to seek to hide any of its details. Jimmy's questions, albeit kind, had been strict and searching. When he left the house he was in full possession of all the facts, in full belief that Leleu, goaded to madness by this crushing climax to long years of petty opposition, was entirely justified in the

course he had marked out for himself. Social decency, coupled with the law of the Catholic church, forbade divorce; but Jimmy Lord felt that Leleu had every right to take his child and himself, and live apart from Arline until such time as her penitence should show a deeper proof than words. The marriage vows were shattered; but it was Arline who had shattered them. Once and yet again Leleu had done his best to forge together the broken links; but it had been all in vain. Now he must wait for Arline.

Jimmy was a social conservative; the affair could not fail to be known, and, known, to make a distinct sensation among their friends. Moreover, he was Arline's brother. Nevertheless, Jimmy Lord went from Arline straight to Amédée Leleu.

It was not until a full month later that he had the courage to tell Sir Morris of the events of that morning. Then, late one night when they were smoking alone in the library, Jimmy found relief in words, relief, too, in the sympathetic attention of Sir Morris. Sir Morris heard him to the end of the whole tragic, pitiful story, though it was long past midnight when Jimmy ceased to speak. Then, at the end, Sir Morris uttered terse judgment.

"I don't see how the poor chap could well help himself," he said thoughtfully. "She has attacked him on his vital spot. Leleu's religion is no empty form to him. She's your sister, I know, Jimmy; but I'll be hanged if, in his place, I wouldn't have done exactly the same thing."

And Jimmy nodded in slow agreement.

"I, too. But, meanwhile, what is going to happen next?"

Sir Morris struck a match.

"The child is in the Ursuline Convent?"

"Yes. Leleu thought she'd be safer there."

Sir Morris understood.

"Then your sister has tried to see her?"

Jimmy laughed shortly.

"Yes. It's best not to question her motives, though. For my part, I suspect they are Protestant in every sense of the word, not maternal."

"Oh, I'd not say that," Sir Morris demurred. "Anyway, I suppose the child could n't be in better hands than she is now."

"No; perhaps not. Poor little soul, it nearly broke her heart to find she could n't go back to Bellevue. She is an affectionate little thing," Jimmy observed thoughtfully.

"Does she mourn for her mother?"

"Not so much as you'd expect. You see, Arline never used to go out to the convent to see her; and, at seven, a child soon forgets. Now and then she asks when she can go to see her mother; but it is Leleu that she adores."

"Where is Leleu, nowadays?" Sir Morris asked. "I almost never see him."

"He is living in his old room on Haldimand Hill, and working like a dog, meanwhile. He's not going out much. We coax him here now and then, when he knows you and Stanwood are to be away, and Patsy makes a point of seeing the child, every few days. You know she always liked Leleu."

"Jimmy," Sir Morris demanded abruptly; "did it ever occur to you to thank God for your wife?"

It was long before either man spoke again. At last, Jimmy reverted to the subject of the Leleus.

"It has been an awful smash," he said thoughtfully. "It remains to be seen whether they ever will be able to pick up the pieces. Arline will have it all to do; at least, in the first of it. And," Jimmy smoked for a moment in silence. Then he blurted out; "and just now she seems bent on trampling the pieces underneath her feet."

Sir Morris sat up, stiff and straight.

"What do you mean?"

"That I walked in on St. Just calling there, two days ago," Jimmy answered gruffly.

"What!" The word came like an explosion.

"It's a fact." Jimmy heaved a weary sigh.

"But — is she crazy?" Sir Morris demanded. "I beg your pardon, old man. I know she is your sister; but, after all, is n't there a little risk in the situation?"

"There could n't well be more. She is hastening the end, and not the right end, either. The fact is, Arline is flirting with St. Just, and he is taking her in earnest. It's not worth while to talk of his motives. Hers I can't read. Now and then I wonder whether she is doing it to pique Leleu into coming back to her. If so, she does n't know her man."

"Have you said anything to her?"

Jimmy smiled mirthlessly, as he made expressive answer, —

"She sent down word to me, yesterday, that she was not at home."

"Hm — m — m! And then?"

"I am blest if I know."

Sir Morris broke the pause.

"Which is your sister's day at home?" he asked.

Arline, meanwhile, alone in the house on the Esplanade, was counting the dreary days which dragged past her, keeping a brave face before others and plotting, plotting ceaselessly how she could bring her husband back to her. Of her going to him, as yet her mind made no question.

To the outward eye, Leleu's absence changed her life but little. The household routine remained the same. Arline went and came and received her friends as usual. Her pride forbade either retirement or retreat. She even schooled herself to speak of Leleu now and then, and always in a tone which lacked all bitterness. Her poise,

however, was only the mask which she wore when the eye of the world was upon her. Alone in her home, the solitude and the stillness maddened her. They even drove her out for long walks far into the country where, wandering at will among the open roads, she saw no need to hold her face in the lines of its set composure. Now and then, her old friends drove past her ; but, after one glance at her face, they merely nodded and hastened on their way, for it was plain enough that, at such times, Arline Leleu was in no mood to bandy social chat.

She came home from these walks, weary of body, tired of nerve. A hunted look was in her dark blue eyes ; but her colour was as dazzling as ever. Only at breakfast after her sleepless nights when, over and over in ceaseless round, she went over the past, present and future, only in the early morning hours did her unwonted pallor show how the strain was telling upon even her vigorous young strength. The situation was plainly intolerable to her. Never had Leleu's love seemed more precious to her than now, when she appeared to have lost it forever. That the loss had come of her own free will, however, as yet she took no heed.

Arline's summing up of the case was simple. She had married a French Catholic ; and, in that one fact of the marriage, she had made the one great concession. Since that time, while keeping to the letter of her marriage vows, she had yet done all in her power to lead her husband to a point of view more fitting for the man who had married Arline Lord. He had ignored her efforts, then resented them, then repented of the bitterness of his resentment. After that had come the child. She had done what she could to ensure to the child some measure of religious freedom, and Leleu had resented it even more bitterly than he had resented her attempted influence upon himself. In time, doubtless, even as he had done before,

he would come back to her, penitent and loving. Only — But, at this point, Arline's brave analysis invariably broke down. Only, this time, his penitence was so long in coming. Weeks had passed by, and Leleu had made no sign.

There had been no effort to keep the situation secret. In fact, such effort would have been entirely futile, for both Leleu and the Lords were known from end to end of the garrulous little city. Moreover, society rarely had a chance to discuss an affair which had smitten both races at one blow, and society made the most of its chance by discussing the affair at length and with avidity. In both sets, the judgment was terse. The French friends of Leleu pitied him unreservedly. The English acquaintances of Arline declared that it had served her right for marrying a French Catholic. Meanwhile, as by common consent, they focused their eyes upon Arline. Leleu's steady, patient acquiescence, while it won their full respect, nevertheless furnished no element of interest to their sensation-loving gaze.

As a matter of course, the watching of Arline involved a certain amount of social connection. Quebec was just launching itself upon the gayest season it had ever known, and Arline was destined to have her due share of the gayety. Curiosity forbade cutting her; and, moreover, the Canadian conscience is not that of New England. In any community, the casting the first stone is fraught with danger; one never knows what direction the second stone may take nor what the angle of its rebound may be. People called upon Arline and invited her as before. Her own jealous sensitiveness assured her that the calls were shorter, the invitations to the larger and more formal functions. Nevertheless, queenly and commanding as ever, she kept up her own share of the social interchange, and thanked the fates that her courage was equal to the task.

Sooner or later, that winter, all the world with two exceptions dropped in at the house on the Esplanade, inspected the hostess and went away to exchange impressions. The two were Patience and Molly Lord. At the end of Arline's second week alone, first Patience and then Molly had been denied admittance. Later, the same fate had awaited Jimmy, and from the same cause. Once for all, Arline had determined to receive no advice from her family in the matter. To the surprise of them all, however, Brooke Lord continued to be a welcome guest. On the morning after the tragedy, he had said his say to Arline, forcefully and with plainness. From beginning to end, he had reviewed the whole history of Arline's married life. Then he had closed the matter, never to reopen it.

As the weeks passed by, there were two guests who never failed to appear on each of Arline's reception days. Achille St. Just was one; Sir Morris Plante was the other. St. Just, in those winter weeks, was a frequent guest in the house on the Esplanade. His calls were decorously short; but his manner to Arline was the manner of the old, familiar friend of the family, a friend full of chivalry and of anxious care for her content. He had a trick of placing her chair, of taking a teacup from her hand, which implied to the looker-on that Arline's chair and Arline's teacup summed up the world for him. His whole bearing to her held the impress of a grave, yet eager devotion. And Arline received his devotion with the half-fascinated fear which stirs us in the presence of a snake. Beyond that, too, her womanhood was of the sort which longs acutely for the companionship and care of man. With Leleu absent and Jimmy tabu, she allowed St. Just to step in and fill the gap. Her choice of him was by no means random. His frequent presence in the house might be the one thing needful to entice Leleu back to his overthrown allegiance.

Vary the hour for his coming as he would, chafe as he would at the other man's presence, St. Just never failed to find Sir Morris Plante before him in the drawing-room of Arline Leleu. The Englishman, huge and a bit hilarious, came early and stayed late. He totally disregarded the laws concerning the proper sequence of guests. He sat out people by the dozen, smiling blandly and waiting upon Arline with the deft deference of a prince of butlers. Now and then, and always when St. Just was present, he entered upon a vigorous flirtation with his hostess, a wholly one-sided flirtation to which she accorded but a languid interest, although it goaded St. Just to the verge of frenzy. Arline was quite at a loss as to the cause of this sudden devotion on the part of Sir Morris. Since the first night of their meeting, months before her marriage, he had never manifested any overweening desire for her society. His presence was something of an inconvenience; but Sir Morris, albeit a foreigner, was too omnipotent in social life to make it wise for her to refuse to receive him on her day. For one short hour, she held the suspicion that he was there as Jimmy's spy. Then she recalled her brother's character as she had always known it, and dismissed the suspicion as being unworthy of them all.

At last, St. Just made open revolt.

"Confound that Englishman!" he said, one afternoon in late February. "He is always in the way. Come out on the terrace, Madame Leleu, before your bulldog gets on your scent."

Arline laughed. Then, without pausing to ask how Sir Morris Plante or any other man could be in St. Just's way, she turned back at St. Just's side and crossed the Ring to the terrace.

It was a still, windless afternoon, clear and bright, but so cold that few people were abroad. Once and again St. Just led the way up the terrace, talking the while in his

most winning vein. Brilliant scraps of gossip and of epigram flew from his lips, mingled, every now and then, with some bit of sentiment which, too elusive to bring down rebuke, yet called a deeper flush to Arline's cheeks. And Arline, exhilarated by the swift, cold walk, excited by his words, glowed like a vivid coal. For the passing hour, she took no thought of anything, save that it was good to be alive and tramping to and fro along that stripe of terrace above the ice-locked river.

For a third time, St. Just turned at the Champlain statue; but Arline demurred.

"It is time that I went home."

"You are cold?" he asked, with instant anxiety.

"No; but it must be late."

"Not so very. May I not have this one last turn?" he urged.

She assented, for his mood was stirring the blood in her veins till it went to her head like wine. Side by side and in perfectly adjusted step, they paced up the terrace, wheeled about and came down again towards the lower end. Then, all at once, Arline gave a sudden start, and the blood rushed from her cheeks, leaving them pearly white. Around the corner of the Château wall, scarcely ten feet away, Leleu and little Agatha were coming towards them.

By some strange chance, possible even in so small a city, Arline had caught no glimpse of Leleu since the November night when the Basilica bell had tolled the knell of their dying love. Now, for an instant, she saw all things through a wavering mist; but, even through the mist, she was dully aware that Leleu looked thin and old, that his face was white and drawn. Then, summoning all her pride, she forced back the tears which were hurrying to her eyes, and lifted her head with the old haughty gesture which Leleu had known of yore. And Leleu, his dark

eyes all alight with the love he had supposed forever dead, saw the gesture and turned his gaze aside. Then, for the first time, he saw who was Arline's companion. His face went even whiter, and the light died out from his eyes.

"Oh, mamma!" Agatha sprang forward, with a glad cry of welcome. "Where have you been?"

For one long moment, Arline held the little face tightly against her skirts. For another moment, she lifted the child to her shoulder and hid in her fluffy hair the scalding tears which would not be choked back. Then, slowly, gently, she set down the child once more.

"Go now, darling," she said quite steadily. "And—good-by."

And, with a brief word to St. Just, she passed on down the terrace and out of sight.



“ For one long moment Arline held the little face tightly against her skirts.” *Page 288.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

PATIENCE LORD, crossing the Ring on her way home from the library, had seen from afar the meeting between Arline and Amédée Leleu. Turning aside to avoid Arline and her companion, she had hurried through the Château court and overtaken Leleu as he was passing the bandstand. Impetuously she called his name. Then she stood back, affrighted, as he turned, at the wild pain in his dark eyes.

“Good afternoon,” she said, as blithely as she could. “Isn’t it cold? I’ve been for a long walk and am half frozen. I must see Agatha, though. Do you mind coming into our house for a few minutes? Agatha looks as cold as I feel.” But, while she spoke, her eyes were not upon Agatha’s rosy, smiling face; but upon Leleu, shivering as though in a chill.

Inside the house, with a word of apology, she swept the child off to her own room and left Leleu alone with Jimmy. To the mind of Patience, Jimmy’s presence was a balm for every woe. Moreover, there were hours and circumstances when man was bound to turn to man. Accordingly, it was a long half-hour before she brought Agatha back to help make tea and pass the cups; and, when she came, she saw to it that Sir Morris came, too, as an effectual barrier to difficult subjects of conversation.

It was late, that evening, before she was left alone with her husband. Then briefly she described the little scene; briefly he told her of his talk with Leleu. Then together,

as they had so often done before, they went over the whole tragedy and tried in vain to forecast the end.

To Patience Lord, when she went to bed, that night, it seemed that the Leleus had clouded her whole horizon. Within a week, however, another cloud had risen, so black and full of portent that, beside it, all other clouds were like floating bits of summer haze.

The cloud had risen from a slum in St. Sauveur. There had been a mild case of varioloid; then a severer case; then a baby had died, and then another. And the parents, optimistically regarding the baby's salvation as an assured fact, saw no need of using vaccine to prolong a life which might end in sin and consequent hell. Children were plenty, they argued; it was something to know that they were irrevocably saved. And, meanwhile, in the upper town, society was dancing its way towards the gayest carnival season which the old gray city had ever known.

Then, all at once, society had paused and held its breath to listen to a whisper growing ever more insistent and more loud. A child was ill on Richelieu Street. A servant, broken out with the disease, had been taken away from a house on the Grande Allée. Society shivered. Then it stopped its ears and fell to dancing more merrily than ever, all but the doctors. They, resolute, but all too futile, swept their invitation cards aside, unanswered, and ranged themselves, shoulder to shoulder, to fight the foe which had stolen on them, unawares. But what were a score or two of doctors in the face of an epidemic already started among the thousands of the population who refused all vaccination? Fate denied them victory; their professional honour denied capitulation. They could only stand to their guns and fight a losing fight, although winning thereby the hearty respect of every thoughtful man. And the epidemic, gaining strength from hour to hour, like a mountain torrent in the spring, swept over one barrier after another until

society stopped its dancing, and the whole city lay in silent fear. And between the city and the rising tide of the epidemic, shoulder to shoulder in grim array, there still stood the little line of doctors, banded together to fight their losing fight.

From the first, the disease had swept fastest of all among the children. It had taken them as they came, French and English, poor and rich, singly and in groups. At the first alarm, Bellevue had scattered its little colony among their homes. The Ursulines were made of different stuff, and back of them was the tradition of the days of old when neither Indian raid nor British siege had been potent to break open the wall of their routine. In the end, however, disease accomplished what raid and siege had been powerless to effect. In some way, no one, least of all the doctors, could tell how, the epidemic had crept inside their cloistered walls. Not a child, this time, but an aged nun, was stricken with the pest, and, on the instant, the children were sent hurrying away into a place of safety. Those whose parents chose it, could return to their own homes. The others must pass through quarantine, and then be sent to a convent farther down the river.

Jimmy was in Leleu's room, when the message came. In these days of deadly, sickening fear, a fear which each man, believing himself immune, lavished upon his neighbour, one and all of the Lords had been upon the rack regarding Agatha. It would take so little preparation to fit her for the Kingdom of Heaven ; and immortal life, like all things else, might well move along the path of least resistance. Leleu took the message. Then, dropping into a chair, he hid his face in his hands.

"Is it the child?" Jimmy demanded swiftly, for, in those days, no one paused to question the cause of sudden shock, only the person.

"Yes."

"May God be pitiful!" Jimmy said reverently. "How bad is it?"

Leleu roused himself.

"It is one of the nuns in the convent. The children must be scattered."

Jimmy strode to the telephone.

"Oh, if that's all," he said, with recurring buoyancy. "I thought, from the way you took it, that the youngster must be nearly gone. I'll telephone to Patsy."

"What for?"

"To see what she thinks of Agatha's coming straight to us. You can't well have her here, going out to your meals and all. Our house is the proper place for the child."

But Leleu protested.

"You can't. Think of the danger!"

"Danger be hanged! We've both of us been freshly vaccinated. Patsy's arm was fit for a giant, and mine refused to take. We're all right. Besides, the youngster very likely has never been near the nun. Moreover," and Jimmy took down the receiver; "Agatha is my godchild, and I propose, if Patsy's willing, to have a finger in her training while I can."

"But if she should take it?"

Still holding the receiver, Jimmy faced about, regardless of the voice of Central, who was vainly clamouring for the number desired.

"She has been vaccinated; has n't she?"

"Yes."

"And it took?"

"Superbly."

Jimmy faced about again to the wall.

"Very well. Then the risk is reduced to its lowest terms. What is left of it, we'll leave in the arms of Patsy and on the knees of the gods. Yes, Central. Ready? Well, give me Nine-eight-seven."

His telephoning completed, Jimmy came forward and dropped into a chair by the fire.

"It's a great source of comfort to have a Patsy," he observed. "One can always count on her, you know." And his happy eyes, fixed upon the blazing coals, took no heed of the fact that Leleu winced at the words as at a blow.

In all truth, in such a crisis as this present one, it was no joyous thing for a man whose wife was yet living in the city, to be forced to make over his child to the care of another. Leleu's passionate devotion would have chosen to keep Agatha all for his own. Such a course, however, was entirely out of the question. He could not absent himself from his office for whole days at a time. Neither could the child, for whole hours at a time, be left to shift for herself. Jimmy's offer, unexpected, generous and fraught with danger to himself and Patience, was the ideal solution of the problem. Leleu, as the days passed by and he saw the loving discipline under which Patience kept his little girl, was ready to admit as much to himself.

Sir Morris Plante, meanwhile, was an avowed mystery to them all. On the morning after the disease had appeared upon the Grande Allée, Jimmy and Patience had come down to breakfast with their minds reluctantly braced to say farewell to their welcome guest. To their surprise, Sir Morris ignored his own plans completely, although his jovial face grew grave, as he spoke of the peril hanging over the city. Jimmy at last broached the question.

"I suppose you'll begin to pack, to-day, Sir Morris."

"What for? Are you going to turn me out?"

"No. Of course, we'd hate your going. Still, I confess it is about the safest thing you can find to do."

With delicate precision, Sir Morris chipped the end of his egg.

"I don't want to force myself upon a reluctant hostess,"

he remarked then. "However, I've no intention of going away, until you order me out, Mrs. Lord. Fact is, it is anything but the safest thing for me to do. I've been vaccinated up to the limit; I'm probably immune. Moreover, if I'm to be exposed at all, the deed is very likely done by this time. It strikes me that it is a long way more sensible for me to stay here and take it as it comes, where they have learned the trick of nursing it, than it would be to go bolting off to spread it somewhere else. No; I think I'll stop here." And he attacked his egg with appetite. When the last of it was swallowed, he looked up again, with an odd, uncertain little smile playing about his lips. "Besides," he added boyishly; "I'd feel easier to stay and see you through it. A chap does n't get too many friends like you, you know."

The carnival season had been only just at hand, when the epidemic had crept up into the upper town. Mid-Lent had sounded, when the Ursuline Convent had scattered its pupils, and a late Easter found the disease still gaining ground. By early May, a health map of the city would have resembled the face of one stricken with the disease in its most virulent type. And still the doctors fought, bravely, ceaselessly and all in vain. The tide of disease rose higher and higher yet.

Over the whole city lay an atmosphere of tense waiting. As the spring days dragged slowly by, no one realized the full horror of the present, no one sought to forecast the future. Society had ceased to be. Each man went about his business, with a dazed and dogged determination to keep his house in order for whatever might befall. For many in those May days, this detailed attention to routine was all that saved from madness. As yet it was too soon to count the gaps in the ranks. For the time being, horror ousted grief.

Nature, that spring, seemed in a curiously callous mood.

Never had the sunshine rioted more gayly among the tall gray walls, gilding the crosses which seemed powerless to save, playing bo-peep among the streets where Death stalked to and fro. In the Ring, the fountain plashed merrily, and, above the fountain, the leaves whispered together their sweet spring secrets, while along the Sainte Foy Road, the squirrels frisked over the fences in a very abandonment of joy. Alone of all of Nature's children, the human race seemed smitten. Everywhere else was the glad spring life. And yet, day after day, along the Sainte Foy and Cap Rouge Roads, the very squirrels were frightened and scurried away to hide themselves, as again and again there crept past them the little knot of mourners, going forth to bury their dead.

And then all at once, no one could say how or why, the tide began to recede. The doctors, bony shoulder to bony shoulder, began to lessen the pressure upon their lips. As the days crept by, even they breathed more freely, while, upon rare occasions, one heard the old-time beat of heels upon the terrace, or an old-time careless laugh. By the end of another week, men whispered to one another that the tide was surely ebbing.

And then, one morning when May was waning with the tide, Jimmy Lord lay with his lazy eyes fixed on Patience, as she passed and repassed before the open doorway of her dressing-room. When her dressing was done, down to the very last pin, he hailed her in his wonted jovial voice.

"Keep your distance, Patsy, and bundle Sir Morris and Agatha out of the house as soon as ever you can. I'm cold and hot, and hot and cold, and my back is aching its predestined ache. Clear out as fast as you can, and, when you're safe, telephone somewhere for a nurse. It won't be bad; but it's just as catching." And, rising on his elbow, he tossed her a farewell kiss.

By noon, Sir Morris and little Agatha were settled in a farmhouse in the mountains beyond Lorette, Agatha in wild hilarity over the prospect of a holiday alone with Uncle Morris, Sir Morris decidedly sheepish in the face of his young ward. In a room in the extreme top of the house, a nurse in cap and vast, close pinafore was in charge of Jimmy who already was tossing to and fro in fever. And down-stairs, within reach and hearing, although beyond a barrier of doors and sheets reeking of carbolic, Patience Lord and Stanwood Tyler were bravely facing the chances of the next three weeks.

Four days later, it was officially announced that Jimmy Lord was suffering from the mildest possible case of discrete small-pox.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LIKE many another householder in the stricken city, Arline had left town long before Easter. Even under the most conventional conditions, her presence there could do no real good to any one. Brooke had assured her that Agatha, in Jimmy's home, was well and guarded from every chance of danger. Leleu, vibrating like a pendulum between his office and his room, was in no especial peril, and the Brooke Lords had already gone to their cottage on the Island. In any case, Arline could have seen no reason against her following the general exodus. In the present state of family disruption, reasons ceased to exist. Accordingly, she closed her house in haste and, keeping her servants with her, went to settle in a little house far down on the southern side of the Island, where the telephone formed her sole connection with the city.

Thither, one afternoon in early May, St. Just had followed her. She had taken pains to leave no address in town. Not even were her letters to be sent after her. No telling what infection might lurk in the postman's bag. Only the Brooke Lords knew of her present quarters. Accordingly, it was with unfeigned surprise that she met St. Just who, braving the dubious delights of the short sail and the long drive, smiling and debonnair as always, presented himself at her door, one afternoon in May.

If the truth had been told, more than half of the secrecy and haste of Arline's departure had been aimed at Achille

St. Just. His fervid attentions long since had begun to bore her. Now they were getting upon her nerves. He was always eager and respectful. He demanded nothing but what she might choose to give him. However, give him much or little, he never seemed fully satisfied and, furthermore, his manner, in some undefinable fashion, was beginning to assume that all things might be his for the asking. When she was in his presence, Arline enjoyed his society to the full. He was clever and never cloying. Apart from him, however, and more especially of late, she had begun to feel as if, thread by thread, he were enwrapping her in a silken net which in time would cover her completely. Of her ability to break that net she felt no doubt; it was only that the effort which would be involved would be distasteful to her, distasteful, too, the sight of the heap of tattered meshes.

Arline had walked the house, until dawn had broken over the night which had followed her meeting Leleu upon the terrace. No dawn was in her mood, however, only the blackness of midnight and of despair. She had been inexpressibly shocked at the sight of Leleu, at his look of utter wretchedness, shocked by his evident emotion. Her own heart had leaped wildly, as her eyes had lain on his. Then she had steeled herself and pulled her eyes away. It was Leleu, who had left her, not she Leleu. It was Leleu who must come back. How could she well come back, she asked herself bitterly, when she was already there? For weeks and months, the house, the servants, even she herself had waited there in vain. Leleu had made no sign. And as for St. Just, he was the friend of her husband's student days. What wonder that he should come to seek her in her trouble? She had hoped that Leleu might hear of his frequent calls. If her husband really did distrust St. Just, then what more swift way could she take to bring him back to guard her? If he

did not distrust St. Just, then what harm in her receiving the Frenchman's calls? Arline was satisfied with her logic. Nevertheless, she would have chosen that Leleu should have received rumours of the calls, rather than that he should have met them pacing to and fro together on the terrace. And Leleu had looked so old, so wan, so ill.

Then, as the gray morning light broke over the room, its first gleam rested upon the long mirror before which she had chanced to pause. For an instant, Arline had stared with dull unrecognition at the picture so faintly reflected there, at the elaborate dinner gown, at the haggard face with its glowing eyes and tight-drawn lips. Then, swiftly moving aside until the picture had vanished, she sank down into a chair and bowed her head upon her clasped bare arms. In that night just ending, pride and womanhood had met and grappled to the death. Every fibre and nerve of her womanly nature were crying out, bidding her to recall Leleu to his overthrown allegiance, bidding her to go to him, even, and pray for a pardon which too many men would refuse to give. Her pride bade her to wait in silence. It was Leleu who had gone away. It was for Leleu, then, to return. And yet? And yet? For her womanhood went rushing backward and forward over the memory of his gentlehood and love and care, then came sweeping back upon her with the sure knowledge that the fault, in its beginning, had been all her own.

And in its end? Her pride rose up, revolting.

Quietly she lifted her head. Then she crossed the room to change her gown for the simpler dress of the morning. As yet, the battle had but just begun.

However, after breakfast that morning, she wrote a hasty note to St. Just, telling him that, for the next month, she should keep no day at home. For some reason

which she would have been loath to analyze, she was unwilling to subject him to the "not at home" which was to bar the door to her other guests.

With the first outbreak of the epidemic, St. Just had had important business which had summoned him to Montreal. The business, dragging itself along from day to day, had yielded only to repeated telegrams calling him back to his desk, and Arline had already left the city before he returned. Accordingly, she had felt the more acute surprise, when she had seen him standing on her steps.

A week later, he came again, and, a week later, still again. In the midst of his third visit, Arline had been summoned to the telephone. St. Just had grown tired of sitting alone on the veranda, by the time she returned to her chair. When she did return, he was frightened at her pallor.

"You have had bad news?" he queried, as he rose.

She bowed her head.

"Jimmy is ill."

He felt no need for question. Nevertheless, —

"The universal enemy?" he asked.

"Yes. He was taken, three or four days ago; but they have not been sure, until to-day. It was slow in coming out. Just at the very first, though, they sent Agatha away to the mountains with Sir Morris Plante."

"Why not here to you?" St. Just made incisive question.

The question, cutting across her sorrowful anxiety, left poison in its scar. The old edge rang hard in Arline's voice, as she answered, —

"Because Sir Morris will exert no harmful influence."

"And you would?" St. Just supplemented, with a light laugh.

The blood swept up across her cheeks, drowning their pallor in its crimson tide.

"So they say," she replied haughtily. "It seems I have no rights, even where my own child is concerned."

St. Just dropped his eyes, then his voice.

"He has been hard with you, Madame Leleu, hard and —"

"I beg your pardon." Arline's voice was icy now, her head held high. "I think you forget, Monsieur St. Just, of whom you are speaking."

If he quailed at her tone, at least he did not show it. His answer was fearless, albeit humble.

"No," he said gravely; "I can never forget. Neither can I forget how completely he has forgotten you."

And Arline grew white once more, as her eyes clouded and fell from his face. When she spoke again, it was to recur to the subject of Jimmy.

"Patience telephoned to Brooke; he sent the message on to me. They say that Jimmy's case is very light, that he is scarcely ill at all."

"Where is he?" St. Just asked as, disregarding Arline's gesture towards a chair, he still stood leaning against the rail.

"At home, in their house on Des Carrières Street. He is on the top floor, with a nurse and a telephone. It is the room Mr. Tyler usually has, you know, and the telephone was already there in the room."

"That must be most convenient, and reassuring, too, for Mrs. Lord," St. Just observed courteously. "Where has she gone?"

"Nowhere."

"She has not remained in the house?" St. Just's tone was incredulous.

"Yes. She and her brother are on the lowest floor. Brooke says there are all manner of disinfectants, and that Patience insisted she must stay, to be in reach in case of need."

"Mrs. Lord is very loyal," St. Just remarked.

"Very hysterical, you would better say," Arline corrected him. "I believe in loyalty. 'This seems to me to be hysterical and rather sentimental. She can do no good; she only exposes herself for nothing, and to what?'"

Even St. Just's voice dropped, as he made grave answer, —

"To death."

Arline shivered.

"And death is n't the worst of it. Even before I left town, I saw such hideous faces on the street. Do you know, if I were taken, I think I'd pray to die, rather than run the risk of living and being so scarred. Patience has no right to run the risk of such a thing. If she is careless of herself, she should have a little mercy upon her friends."

St. Just bowed gallantly.

"Mrs. Lord has less to guard from risk than has Madame Leleu," he said in French.

Arline smiled.

"That is for you to say," she answered, also in French. Then swiftly she changed to English, while, rising, she began to pace the veranda with lithe and noiseless steps. "After all, it is no subject for pretty speeches, Monsieur St. Just. Patience is in danger. She has no right, for a sentimental whim, to put herself within the possibility of such disfigurement. Jimmy is best off with a nurse. Patience should never think of seeing him. What good would she do? And a man does n't care to be coddled. Really, it's absurd. Some one ought to bring her to reason."

St. Just stooped to pick up his hat.

"But why not you?" he asked.

"I?" She laughed bitterly. "Patience and I understand each other far too well to influence each other."

She knows what I think of her hysterical way of treating Jimmy like a petty god, so what is the use of my reminding her of the fact now?"

"None, I fear. But I must say farewell. I am sorry to leave you in such alarm."

Arline frowned.

"I am not alarmed, Monsieur St. Just. I am vexed, annoyed at Patience; that is all."

"But the trouble is the same, call it what you will," he told her, as he bowed above her hand. "In any case, command me. No one would be more glad to help than I."

Without speaking, she drew her hand away. St. Just pressed his last words yet once again.

"You believe me?" he urged insistently.

She raised her eyes to his, and forced herself to smile.

"Oh, yes, certainly," she assented, with a studied carelessness. "Thank you, yes. And good-by."

It was three full weeks before St. Just came again, and the cause of his delay lurked in her carelessness. He had determined that it would be good for them both to have Arline miss him for a time and, more than that, to realize that she did miss him. For three long weeks, he left her quite alone. Then, one June evening, when she sat on the veranda looking out across the moonlit lawn and the shining river, he came upon her, unannounced. His lips were smiling, and his eyes as well; but back of the smile in his eyes there lurked an expression which boded little good for the peace of Arline Leleu.

And Arline met him with unstudied eagerness. The days of her exile were dragging heavily; she longed for news from the city, most of all from Amédée Leleu. Of his welfare, however, she was too proud to ask Brooke Lord, and Brooke Lord had told her, months ago, that never again should he mention to her her husband's name.

In the endless days of idleness when she saw no one from morning to night, no one, at least, save the servants of her household, Arline had space to think of Lelcu, to ponder at length upon his character, and upon the risks he must have run, going to and fro to his office, day by day, in that plague-stricken city. And if— She stitched away at her bit of embroidery more diligently than ever. Even St. Just would have been a welcome guest. At least, he broke the monotony, and, too, he came from the city and was a bearer of tidings. It grew too dark to set more stitches in her embroidery; it was too warm to go inside the lighted house. She sat on the veranda and watched the shifting moonlight, and chafed, chafed ceaselessly at her remoteness from all which aforetime had gone to make up her life.

“Madame is quite alone and enjoying the moonlight?” St. Just’s voice asked suddenly in French.

Arline gave a slight start. Over the thick, soft turf, his step had been inaudible, and already he stood close at her side, with the light of the full moon striking across his eager, nervous face.

“Monsieur St. Just! You have come upon me like a ghost,” she said, with a little laugh, as she gave him her hand.

St. Just bowed over their clasped fingers.

“Rather call it something less unwelcome,” he demurred.

She laughed again.

“Surely not an angel unawares,” she answered lightly.

“I did n’t know you posed for that, Monsieur St. Just.”

Deliberately he seated himself in the chair at her side.

“Unawares; but not, I hope, unwelcome,” he observed.

“It is long since I was here.”

“The remedy was in your hands,” Arline reminded him.

Without speaking, he turned to gaze at her, steadily and long. Then, still without speaking, he turned his eyes away and fixed them on the white sail of a little boat, beating up through the southern channel at the foot of the wide lawn.

“Not altogether,” he said briefly then.

“But why? Surely I never urged you not to come,” she answered, still in the same careless tone she had used from the first.

Again came the little pause.

“Not in words.”

“How then?”

Once more, he fixed his eyes upon her face, and, even in the moonlight, the eyes looked greedy.

“There are ways more elusive than words, yet far more potent. It was those ways by which you assured me that my presence was not needful to you.”

In the still, white moonlight, he saw her wince, saw the faint colour rise across her cheeks; but her voice was under perfect control, as she replied, —

“And so, by staying away, you thought to make it more needful?”

“I did,” he answered boldly.

In his turn, he winced at her laugh, and at her words, —

“Pardon me, Monsieur St. Just; but isn’t your social method a bit too obvious to be successful?”

He lowered his voice.

“In desperate cases one takes refuge in the obvious.”

Still smiling, she rose to her feet.

“And do you call this a desperate case?” she inquired languidly. “If so — forgive me — the desperation must be wholly upon your side. I find it rather amusing.”

Of necessity, he too had risen. Now, as she turned away, he put out a detaining hand.

“Where are you going?” he demanded shortly.

"To the hall for a wrap. It is growing chilly."

"Wait!" he said commandingly. "I have something still to say."

She barely glanced at him; but the glance assured her that his eyes were glowing, his lips unsteady. She felt his mood seeking to dominate her own, yet she held herself braced to meet it.

"Something sufficiently important to make it worth while for me to wait in the cold?" she queried, and her lips still showed their mocking, careless smile.

The smile maddened him. Swiftly he stepped forward and laid his hand on hers.

"Yes, Arline," he said quite low. "Yes, it is."

With a passionless disdain, she shook away his hand.

"Speak quickly, then," she bade him; "and please be good enough to remember that I am Madame Leleu."

Notwithstanding the rebuff, his eyes never wavered, and his words came clear and distinct across the silence.

"In name, yes; but not in fact."

Tiger-like, she turned upon him and stood poised, as if for a spring. Her speech was crisp, sharp.

"Explain yourself, Monsieur St. Just."

For an instant, he quailed. Then his voice lowered again, and became indescribably gentle and caressing.

"What need to explain, Arline? Your husband has abandoned you. You know I am standing near you, only waiting to offer you the love which he —"

"Stop!" And Arline, drawn to her full height, raised her hand imperiously. "You! You dare say you love me? You!"

The ringing scorn in her tone, the defiance of her queenly form, stung him to insolent retort.

"I? Yes. Who else?"

Anger, the outraged anger born of generations of clean

living, was in the poise of her head, in the glitter of her violet eyes, in her hard, cold voice.

"You!" she said again, and no one syllable could ever hold more furious scorn. "But I am the wife of Amédée Leleu."

"What sort of a wife?" he sneered.

She turned upon him haughtily. In that one instant of his question, the memory of the past months stood off from her as stands the vision of a nightmare when one has awakened from sleep.

"The true and loyal wife."

His answer was full of quiet sarcasm.

"At least, Madame Leleu, your own methods are not obvious."

During a long moment, she looked down at him as from a measureless height. Then she made answer, —

"Will you be silent? Your words, your very presence is an insult to me. Your rebuke is worthy of you, and yet it has its bit of truth. I am disloyal to my husband, disloyal to him in allowing a man like you to defile his house with your presence. Go, and never let me see your face again!"

"But, after these long weeks —" he urged.

Her lip curled.

"Weeks of what?" she demanded.

"Weeks of an intimacy which has been to me like —"

Again he quailed at her gesture. When she spoke, however, her voice was level and cold.

"Once and for all, I tell you this. Your society is hideous to me, the sight of you an insult. I have allowed your calls — God knows why. Still, at least, he does know this, that never in my life did I dream that such a man could creep into my experience. If I have sinned, at least I am bearing my punishment, and now is the time for my confession."

"And that?" In his total misunderstanding of her words, his tone grew eager.

"And that," she said slowly; "is to go to Amédée Leleu, to tell him all that has happened, all, to ask him to forgive me, if he can. As for you," she turned upon him once more, with rising rage; "I hate you from the bottom of my heart; but I am grateful to you, in spite of that. Your own contemptible little soul has taught me to measure, as nothing else could do, the great, white soul of Amédée Leleu."

Pale, his face working, St. Just yet forced his lips into the likeness of a smile. He allowed Arline's words to drop into a silence. When at last he spoke, his tone was wholly changed. From the passion of a fallen angel, he had taken on the mockery of a taunting demon.

"Beautiful!" he sneered. "You are most lyric, Madame Leleu. Your dream is rose-coloured; but, alas! it is only a dream, and can never be realized."

"Why?" she demanded, with level, tolerant disdain.

"Merely this: that your husband," his voice lingered insultingly upon the word; "has small-pox and lies at the point of death."

For one instant, Arline's head sank. Then she pulled herself together sharply.

"I refuse to believe you."

St. Just laughed.

"Madame has a telephone."

She bit her lip and hurriedly brushed off the gathering tears.

"Where is he?"

"In the pest house."

She shivered.

"Where is that?"

"Rue Des Prairies, the Civic Hospital. The morgue is also there," St. Just added brutally.

She ignored his final words.

"Des Prairies? Where is that?"

"Near the Canadian Pacific station. Perhaps you intend to go to him."

"I do."

"But the infection?"

"What of it?"

"And the danger to Madame's beauty?"

"I am not afraid."

He raised his brows.

"Is it not — what was your word? — hysterical?"

From head to heel she swept him with her glance. St. Just, base though he was, could not fail to admire her, as she spoke, haughty, calm, indomitable.

"Monsieur St. Just, as you know, I have wronged my husband. For the sake of his forgiveness, I would brave all things, this side the grave. Kindly oblige me by leaving me, for I must make my arrangements to go up to the city at once."

He turned. Then, of a sudden, his love for her, the only love of which his worthless soul had ever shown itself capable, leaped up in his eyes and in his voice. Half involuntarily and with the gesture of a terrified child, he caught at a fold of her dress.

"Arline," he begged; "for your own sake, I implore you not to go into such certain death."

Calmly she put away his hand.

"Be silent," she said, with quiet, queenly dignity. "I am going to see my husband."

Then all at once St. Just laughed, loudly and harshly.

"Unless he is already dead," he retorted.

Then he went away, leaving his words to ring through and through Arline's brain for all the dreary, endless night.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

“**L**OOK at your roses, dearest. One has dropped, dropped, dropped. The leaves are dropping down through the floor of heaven into hell. Catch them. They are so white and soft, too white to go to that scorching flame. See! There is another, falling, falling. And it tires me to fall so far. What makes me drop? I am going down, down, down, from heaven into the deep, dark places where I shall be afraid. Hold me, dearest. You can hold me, if you will, hold me forever and ever and ever in heaven where it is always light and where the roses are always in blossom, white and sweet. Just see them there, dearest, white and heavy with dew! You are like a rose, yourself, in your heavy white gown, and your veil is like the sparkling dew. And I am only a loosened petal, falling away from you. Hold me, dearest, hold me with care. It is terrible to be dropping, dropping, always dropping down through the floor of heaven. And it is so far. I had no thought that it could take so long to go from heaven down to hell. Dearest! Dearest! Stretch your hand out to me and catch me back, before it is too late. No! No! Don't trample me beneath your feet. Crushed petals only fall the faster. Dearest, you are crushing me, crushing me till all my life is gone, and all the time the petals are falling down from the bunch of roses in your hands.”

Although it was long past dark, the room beneath the metal mansard roof was fiercely hot. The one small

window stood wide open in the hope of letting out the air, tainted with disease and laden with the reek of disinfectants. Rather than that, however, it merely served to furnish admission to other reeking odours which rolled up from the wasting rubbish in the yards around, from the brewery and from the cattle market close at hand. In the early afternoon, a heavy summer shower had swept across the city. The western streets of the lower town, shielded from the sun by the overhanging cliff, lay sodden and soaked in the watery moonlight, and the sour, rank smell of the unclean roadways mingled with the rest to form an atmosphere which, it seemed, no man could breathe and live.

The nurse sighed wearily, as she hung the electric light in a corner and pinned a shade across its glare. Then, bending over, she renewed the vaseline upon the patient's face and replaced the linen cloth above. She was a young nurse, and pretty, with a dainty girlish beauty which not even her ugly cap and overall could entirely hide. She was strong, too, in spite of her daintiness. Again and again, in the last eight days, she had lifted in her vigorous young arms the man who was now tossing and mumbling there in the bed. But then, he was very light. Frenchmen were always small, and this man, even in the first of the disease, had been thin to the very verge of emaciation. The girl sighed again, and yet more wearily. It was a bit cruel of fate to hold back her hardest case until the last, until she was worn out, soul and mind and body, by the endless weeks of nursing.

Rising, she went to the window and looked out. She was a girl from the Townships, born among the hills where fresh air and green fields were the heritage of every human being. From her own old room on the southeast corner of the house at home, she had been able to look away through miles of pleasant, open country. This room, too, was on

a southeast corner. Over the high board fence across the road, she could peer down into a junk-filled yard. Above, the city rested upon its steep rock walls. And behind her, on the narrow bed in the corner farthest from the window, tossed her patient who, ever and anon during the eight long days he had been there, broke into babblings of roses and of petals, crushed or falling. It was a case of confluent small-pox, and of the worst.

Only that noon, she had stood beside the Health Officer, as he had bent above the bed, and her courage had left her, not alone at the sound of his words, but at the sight of his kindly face, of the lips beneath his gray mustache and of the misty spectacles which veiled the keen eyes.

"The fever is too high, and the delirium too constant," he said slowly. "I wonder what he means about the roses. There's nothing in this hole to suggest them." Then he shook his head. "The case is slow, slow and severe and obstinate. I have tried all the known remedies, and nothing seems to act." He shook his head again. Then he turned to the girl and laid one wrinkled hand upon her round young wrist. "I can do no more; it is for you to fight it out. In cases such as this, it is the nurse who counts. Pull yourself together," unconsciously his tone grew alert; "and do your best. In all the city, there's not a life better worth a fight than this, the life of Amédée Leleu."

He turned to leave her. At the door, however, he halted and looked back.

"Courage," he bade her bravely. "Who knows but we shall even now win out in the end?"

And the girl, tired to the verge of collapse, yet yielded to his mood, gritted her teeth and resolved to do the best that lay within her.

It was now twelve days since, late one afternoon, Amédée Leleu had come crawling wearily up Haldimand Hill, wearily

up the stairs and locked himself into his room. Shivering in a violent chill, his cheeks were yet scarlet with the fever of a half-hour before. His head was throbbing painfully, the pain in his back and limbs was intolerable. As he threw himself down on his bed, he felt the fever coming back upon him and, fearful of its cause, he rose once more to assure himself that his door was made fast against invasion. An hour later, he was muttering to himself with low and incoherent words.

All the next day, his fever raged. Now and then he had an hour of delirium ; but, for the most part, he was conscious, conscious of the racking pain in his head, conscious of his fixed determination to hold the door barred against all comers. Even his confused brain was wholly resolved upon one thing. Until the rash should come and give a sickening confirmation of his fears, he would keep his secret to himself. Then, if the worst became the fact, he would shut his teeth and be taken to the Civic Hospital.

Early, ominously early on the third day, the worst became the fact. Leleu's eyes rested on his hands ; then, weakened by the fever though he was, he rose and crawled across to the mirror. Sick at heart, once more he crept into bed, where he lay listening for steps to pass his door.

With the coming of the rash, the fever had gone, and with it the delirium. His mind was clear, and it worked unceasingly. He had supposed the epidemic was past, that the danger was over. During the past weeks, he had borne himself with a recklessness which had taken no thought of possible infection. Asked then, he would have said unhesitatingly that he cared not whether he lived or died. Now, in the face of the disease, he was conscious of a wild longing to live at any price. Of a sudden, he felt convinced that life still held in its keeping

much for him. He clung fast to the idea, though of its nature he took no account. So far as human will could go, however, he made a grim resolve that he would not, must not die.

Nevertheless, lying there and staring at his reddened hands, he was keenly alive to the greatness of his danger. Everything warned him of it: the intense pain and fever he had suffered, the early rash, and the great patches of its blistered skin. He had not lived in the city throughout the epidemic, to be left in ignorance regarding its distinctive symptoms. His would be no case like that of Jimmy Lord, who had passed from exuberant health through slight disease to speedy convalescence, while Patience, safe and well, had maintained her watch below. Then he bit his lip, as he thought of Arline. But, at least, she was safe. Perhaps, after all, it was best as it was.

And meanwhile, moment by moment, he was listening for steps outside his door. They had come so often, during the past two days, and with them had come a voice offering food, demanding admission. And Leleu had nerved himself to make brave answer. He was quite well, only a little tired. He had wine there, and biscuits. He needed nothing else. And then the steps had gone away again, treading softly, reluctantly down the stairs. Now, as he lay and waited for their coming, he imagined their wild retreat, the murmur of hasty council below, the tumult which would fill the house. Then the door would open and other steps would mount the stairs, heavy, deliberate steps marking the man in authority. And then? He drew the sheet across his face. Best not to imagine the rest. He knew the outside of the Civic Hospital well. There were two, no, three doors on the street and eight windows sandwiched in between, and the metal mansard was pierced with more windows still, a whole long line of them. The hideous old ambulance whose better days, for-

ever dead, had reduced it to a creaking wreck, was scarcely fit to transport beasts for market, much less a man in need of careful nursing. The past months must have told upon its aged frame. He had not seen it lately; but doubtless it was still in use. And the steps in the hall were very slow in coming.

Then they had come, and he had called out his fearful tidings, and the steps had fled in fear. From that time on, everything had come to pass just as he had foreseen: the tumult in the house, the summons to the doctor, the coming of the Health Officer, brisk and kindly and efficient, then the ambulance and the hideous, jolting progress down by Palace Hill. It had been a heavy morning, and he could still smell the rank odour of the brewery which swept down upon him as the ambulance jogged by its long brick front. He had wondered vaguely if the wraith of Intendant Bigot ever revisited its former haunts, and if it felt no pity when it looked on such as he. Nevertheless, it had been wholly of his choice that he had been taken to the Civic Hospital. Homeless, alone, he could not in honour bring to aliens the danger of infection, and the Health Officer had promised him the best nurse to be found in the entire city. The place, of course, was horrible; but to Leleu there had seemed no choice.

And now eight days had passed, eight days of racking pain and of fever that had mounted high and ever higher. For four whole days, Leleu had kept strict account of time. Then, of a sudden, he had been swept into a fiery darkness where time had ceased to be. Only now and then the darkness had cracked a little, and, by the light which came sifting in through the cracks, he could see Arline advancing towards him, her ringless hands clasped close around the great white roses whose petals dropped unceasingly. Sometimes he watched the falling petals with

anxious, piteous eyes ; sometimes he was a petal, himself, and fell down, down into a lurid darkness which ended by shutting out Arline from his imploring gaze. And all day long upon the seventh day, and all day long upon the eighth, he had fallen, fallen, and, falling, had babbled on about the roses.

"Unless this ends before to-morrow night," the doctor said, on the eighth morning after Leleu's removal to the Civic Hospital ; "unless this ends by then, our fighting chance has gone."

And the nurse, as she pinned the red paper shade about the light, echoed his belief.

Slowly the night wore on, and the babbling never ceased. Now and then the nurse bathed the patient's face and renewed the cloths ; now and then she crossed the room to the window, where she stood looking up at the black mass of the Hôtel Dieu above, wondering what the coming day would bring. And then, just as the dawn began to streak the East, just as the faint sound of the first matin bell tinkled out upon the silent city, the babbling ended, and the room grew strangely silent.

And, meanwhile, Arline was out upon the mighty river which stretched, pale gray, between its dun-gray banks.

St. Just had scarcely left the steps when, turning, she entered the house, called a servant and ordered him to find a carriage to take her up to the end of the Island. The servant had demurred. It was already late. No man would take the long drive at such an hour as that. At length, though grumbling, he had yielded to the imperious will of his mistress, and Arline had hastened to her room, to gather up a few essentials for her journey. Then, heedless of her dinner gown and wrapped in a warm cloak, she had paced to and fro, to and fro again, up and down the hall, until a cab had driven to the door.

The night was far spent when Arline, stiff and cramped,

stepped out of the cab upon the little steamboat landing. The horse had been slow, his master indulgent. Arline, sitting rigidly erect in a corner of the cab, had tried in vain to urge some haste. Then she had given up, and sat in silence, while the one phrase had gone pounding through and through her brain, —

“Unless he is already dead.”

At the landing, she spoke once more.

“Find me a man to row me to the city,” she bade the driver.

He looked at her in amazement. Then he looked out at the ink-black river which was hissing softly past the piles beneath the pier.

“It is impossible,” he said. “Madame must wait for daylight and the steamer.”

She turned upon him fiercely.

“Who told you to say it was impossible? Find me a man at once. I tell you, I will go. Besides, I will pay you well.”

Far away above the distant hills, the sky had turned from gray to rose, as the little boat crept towards the rock-bound city. The moon had set by now, and, against the darker western sky, the old gray bastions and the clustered spires stood out in clear relief. Low in the southwest, as if above the Esplanade, one yellow star still glittered. About them, the river was as yet untouched by the dawn. The tide was flowing up sharply, and the night breeze, sweeping down the valley, cut the dark face of the water into waves that hissed about the tiny boat, ever and anon lifting their heads to peep in, then tumbling back again to go leaping towards the distant sea. Then the eastern sky turned from rose to flame, and sent long banners of pale red light across the sky, until the citadel above their heads was touched with vivid rose. And, as with one final change, the east turned its flame

to dazzling gold and the sun shot up over the edge of the dawn, the boatman shipped his oars beside the long Saint James Street pier.

No cabs were abroad at such an early hour. Arline barely paused to pay the man. Then, wrapping her cloak about her, and grasping her little bag, she hurried to Saint Peter Street and on into Saint Paul. The Laval spire above her head was tipped with rosy light; but the hush of breaking dawn and something of its gloom still rested upon the lower town, and its streets looked unfamiliar to her eyes. Once she went astray, once she halted in indecision; but at length she stood, pale and wan and determined, at the low middle door of the hospital and raised her hand to ring.

Then, for one moment, her hand fell back and dropped to her side. What would she find within those low brick walls? She drew one long, slow breath. Then, lifting her hand once more, she rang.

The nurse, half dropping to a doze, started, as the peal echoed through the silent house. Then, while she rose and crossed to the window, the rasping noise of the opening door came clearly to her ears, followed by the sound of swift, low talk, of question and reply.

"He is here?"

"Yes."

"Alive?"

"I suppose." The answering voice was quite indifferent.

"I must see him."

"It is forbidden."

"No matter. I must come in."

"You will see the Health Officer?"

"I tell you there is no time to lose. Show me his room."

"Without a permit, no one —"

"Let me in. I will pay. In any case, I will come."

"I tell you it is impossible."

"Why?"

"The infection. Madame would carry it away."

"But I shall not go away. I shall stay while he does. Stand away, and let me pass. But here, take your money."

"It is not money. It is the law."

Then, of a sudden, the voice outside rose to a higher note.

"I tell you, you must let me in. I refuse to be shut out. I am his wife, the wife of Monsieur Amédée Leleu."

And the words, floating in through the open window, pierced the sick man's dreams. For an hour, he had been sleeping quietly; now he half opened his dark eyes, as he murmured drowsily, —

"Arline."

Only a moment later, a swift step came up the stairs and a tap, soft, but imperious, sounded on the door. Before the nurse could cross the room, the door swung open and on the threshold stood Arline Leleu. Her radiant hair, damp with the river mist, clung close about her face, her cheeks were blazing now, her violet eyes glowing and wet with tears. Her arms, outstretched towards the narrow bed, had pushed aside her long, dark cloak, showing the pale dinner gown beneath. And face and eyes and poise bore witness to a new-born love which had leaped into being, never more to die.

For one instant, she stood there motionless, undaunted by disease, by the reek of disinfectants, by the barren room, terrified only at the wild beating of her own triumphant heart. For Leleu, roused again by the little stir of her coming, had opened his dark eyes once more and now lay staring at the vision which stood upon his threshold.

“Arline,” he murmured weakly; “have you come back to me?”

The instant’s pause was ended. With a low, glad sound which was neither laugh nor cry, Arline swept forward to the bed, dropped down beside it and gathered the thin shoulders into her strong young arms.

“Amédée,” she whispered, while her tears fell fast upon his face; “I have come, come back to you to be forgiven.”

And Leleu, lying in her arms, gazed up into her eyes with eyes full of an unclouded happiness which the coming years would never dim.

THE END



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